

Socinus (7.)
A
DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
T R U T H
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
FROM THE
LATIN of SOCINIUS.

After the STEINFURT *Copy*.

To which is prefix'd,

A SHORT ACCOUNT
OF HIS LIFE.

THE SECOND EDITION.

Grotius, in the Composure of his Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion, was, among several other Authors, more especially assisted by the valuable Performances of a Writer otherwise justly of ill Fame, Faustus Socinus's little Book de Auctoritate S. Scripturæ, Steinfurti, A. 1611. Edit. Vorst. Dr. Smallbrook's Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of St. David's 1729. p. 34.

L O N D O N:
Printed for W. MEADOWS, at the Angel in
Cornhill. 1732.



TO THE
QUEEN's

MOST EXCELLENT

MAJESTY,
THIS TREATISE

With all Humility is inscrib'd

BY

HER MAJESTY's

Most dutiful, and

Most obedient, humble Servant,

EDWARD COMBE.

TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

MAJESTY

THE

WISDOM

OF

HIS MAJESTY

THE

OF THE

EDWARD CONNEL

Advertisement.

THE Difficulty of meeting with an Edition of this valuable Work by it self, especially that of Steinfurt, which is the best ; the just Praise it receiv'd in publick, not long since, from a learned and judicious * Prelate ; the good Use may be made of it ; and the Purity of Language not being strictly observ'd in the Original, which might, perhaps, render it less grateful to a Reader's Taste, tho' well understood, were the principal Reasons for publishing it in English.

If any shall judge the Version might have been more accurate, or discover some Defects not prejudicial to the main Argument, this ought to be imputed rather to the Cause now assign'd, than to Negligence, or Want of Care in the Translator.

Did the Author's closing so serious and important an Undertaking with Verses out of a Poem need an Apology,

* Dr. Smallbrook.

ADVERTISEMENT.

it might be shewn, that Quotations out of Poets have been us'd by most Authors to adorn and illustrate their Writings; Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristotle, Demosthenes, and other Historians, Philosophers, and Divines, borrow the most applicable Similes, and pregnant Sentences of Homer, Hesiod, and the like, for that End; St. Paul himself, who was Θεόπνευστος, and Θεόπνευστος, divinely inspired, read the Poets. He cites, and thereby consecrates a Verse of Aratus, which says, We are the Offspring of God, that in him we live, and move, and have our Being. He exhorts Christians to shun Vice in the very Words of Menander.

Φθείρονται ἡδὴ χρεῖαν ὁμιλίαν κακῇ.

Evil Communications, &c.

The same Apostle reprehending the Cretans, as addicted to Lying, Fraud, Violence, Rapine, Idleness, &c. proves them to be such, by a Verse of Epimenides, a Poet of Crete.

Κρεῖντες, &c.

Which will suffice to screen the Author from Censure for citing the ITALIAN Poet.



A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE of *SOCINUS*,
And the PROGRESS of
SOCINIANISM.



AUSTUS Socinus, the principal Founder of a Sect that bears his Name, was of a noble Family in *Siena*, a City of *Tuscany* in *Italy*. Several of his Ancestors had been learned and eminent in the Civil

and Canon Law ; as was his Father *Alexander Socinus* admitted to the Degree of Doctor of the same, at * *Siena*, anno 1530, and soon after made Professor in Ordinary in the University of *Padua*. He died young, having married *Agnes*, of whom he had this *Faustus*. She was the Daughter of *Burgesio Petrucci* (chief of the Republick of *Siena*) and *Victoria Piccolomini*, a Lady of singular Merit and Virtue, nearly allied to many Persons of the first Rank and Quality. But, before we proceed, somewhat must be said of another of the Family, namely, *Lælius Socinus*, the first Broacher of the *Socianian* Heresy, Brother to *Alexander*, and Uncle to *Faustus*. He was

* *An University.*

born

born likewise at *Siena*, anno 1525, and being educated by his Father *Marianus Socinus* for the Profession of Laws, believ'd the Science of human Laws might be best drawn from the Fountain Head of the Divine, and was for seeking their Foundation in Holy Scripture: In order thereto, he studied the *Greek* and *Hebrew*, and discover'd, as too presumptuously he thought, that many of the common receiv'd *Doctrines*, not only in the *Roman*, but in all Communion, were contrary to Revelation, the Light of Reason, and common Sense; made absurd Interpretations of the NEW TESTAMENT, such as might elude the plain Intent and Meaning of any Book whatsoever. But whether for Fear of Danger, as being
very

very sensible that private Opinions in Matters of Religion, where he liv'd, might prove very dangerous, or to acquire the Knowledge of modern Languages, he left his native Country at the Age of twenty-one, *anno* 1547, and pass'd four Years in visiting *France, England, Holland, Germany* and *Poland*; but fix'd his Residence after that at *Zurich* in *Switzerland*, where he remain'd for the greater part of his voluntary Exile, esteem'd by many in the highest Stations. No body, at that Time, eminent for Learning, whose Friendship, and even Familiarity, he obtain'd not by his Demeanour, wherein he discover'd singular Prudence and Conduct, for which he was prais'd by *Melanchthon*, and others, in the Letters they wrote
to

to him. He held a Correspondence with the greatest * Divines of that Age. But at length, it being discover'd by Doubts and Questions he propos'd, that he was infected with the Poison of the *Arian* or *Photinian* Heresy, he came to be very much suspected: Concerning which, *Calvin* gave him good Advice in a Letter, it may not be impertinent to insert here.

“ **N**ON est, quod expectes,
 “ dum ad illa, quæ ob-
 “ jicis, quæstionum portenta res-
 “ pondeam. Si tibi per aerias illas
 “ speculationes volitare libet, sine
 “ me, quæso, humilem Christi
 “ Discipulum, ea meditari, quæ

* Viz. *Calvin, Bullenger, Brent, Musculus, Munster, Zanchy, Vergerius, Castalio, Beza, Martyr, Ochinus, &c.*

“ ad

“ ad fidei mei ædificationem fa-
“ ciunt. Ac ego, quidem, silen-
“ tio meo, id, quod cupio, con-
“ sequar; ne tu mihi posthac sis
“ molestus. Liberale vero ingeni-
“ um, quod tibi Dominus contu-
“ lit, non modo rebus nihili frus-
“ tra occupari; sed exitialibus
“ figmentis corrumpi, vehemen-
“ ter dolet. Quod pridem testa-
“ tus sum, serio iterum moneo:
“ Nisi hunc quærendi pruritum
“ mature corrigas, metuendum
“ esse, ne tibi gravia tormento
“ accersas. Ego, si indulgentiæ
“ specie, vitium, quod maxime
“ noxium esse judico, alerem, in
“ te essem perfidus, & crudelis.
“ Itaque paululum, nunc mea as-
“ peritate offendi malo, quam
“ dulcibus curiositatis illecebris
“ male captum, non retrahi. Erit
“ tem-

“ tempus, ut spero, cum te ita
 “ violenter expergefatum fuisse,
 “ gaudebis.

Calend. Jan.

Calv. tuus.

1552

YOU are not to expect I shou'd
 give any Answer to those mon-
 strous Questions you object. If you
 think good to pursue such airy Specu-
 lations, I beg you'd give me leave,
 an humble Disciple of Christ, to study
 and meditate on those Things that
 tend to the Improvement of my Faith;
 and shall, by my Silence hereafter,
 obtain what I desire, I mean, that
 you may be no longer troublesome.
 But am extremely sorry, that such a
 Capacity God has liberally given you,
 shou'd not only be employ'd in Things
 of no Moment, and in Vain; but
 corrupted likewise by destructive
 Dreams

Dreams and Fictions. What I said to you before, I seriously put you in Mind of: If you do not in Time correct this Itch of Enquiry, 'tis to be fear'd, you'll involve yourself in very grievous Troubles. Shou'd I, under a Shew of Indulgence, foster a Vice highly pernicious, I shou'd be both perfidious and cruel; therefore chuse rather to offend a little now, by my present Harshness and Asperity, than not reclaim you from those flattering Allurements of Curiosity, in which you are unfortunately engag'd. A Time, I hope, will come, when you will be glad to have been so roughly awaken'd.

Jan. 1.
1552.

Yours, Calvin.

LÆLIUS

LÆLIUS making the best Use of this Advertifement, and the hard Fate of *Servetus* (who at the Instance of *Calvin* was burnt at *Geneva*, the 27th of *October* following, for writing and ſpeaking againſt the Myſtery of the Holy Trinity) discover'd not his Sentiments, but when and where he thought himſelf ſafe; and behav'd with ſo much Caution, that he liv'd among the capital Enemies of his bad Principles, without the leaſt Moleſtation.

HE met with ſome Diſciples, who heard his Inventions with Reſpect: Theſe were *Italian* Fugitives, who ſtroll'd about *Germany* and *Poland*. He communicated his Errors to his Relations, by Writings, which he ſent to
Siena,

Siena, and made some Converts there.

AFTER his Father's Death, at *Boulogne* in *Italy*, anno 1556, he took a Journey to *Poland*, and obtain'd of the Kings of *Poland* and *Bohemia*, recommendatory Letters to the Dukes of *Venice* and *Florence*, that he might safely abide at *Venice*, as long as his Affairs requir'd, in order to take Possession of his Inheritance, and to regulate the same.

HIS Family at this Time came to be dispers'd by the Inquisition, being suspected (as very well they might) of *Heresy*. His Brother *Camillus* was imprisoned, the rest fled. *Lælius* return'd to *Switzerland*, and died at *Zurich*, in May 1562.

FAUSTUS

FAUSTUS was then at *Lyons* in *France*, and hastened from thence with all Speed, as soon as he heard of his Uncle's Death. He arriv'd at *Zurich* before his Papers were seiz'd and rifled, of which he took Possession, and afterwards made them as serviceable as he could to his own Purpose, being very well appris'd before of their Contents, which he made his chief Business to cultivate, improve, and propagate with indefatigable Diligence and Industry.

WE were necessitated to premise this concerning *Lælius Socinus*, especially, because he was the Leader of his Nephew, and of all, in effect, that follow'd in the *Socinian* Heresy; and the first Author of the Principles on which that Scheme is built. He pub-
B lish'd

lish'd but little, out of Fear of being discover'd ; neither is it certain whether many Books father'd upon him were really his, as is observ'd in the Library of the *Antitrinitarian* Writers.

BUT to return to *Faustus*, his first Course of Life, and chief Accidents that beset him. He was born the fifth of *December* 1639, being younger than his Uncle by fourteen Years. Was depriv'd of his Parents in that Age which is most susceptible of Learning and mental Accomplishments ; he complain'd he had very little apply'd himself, and without any Guide, to the Study of *Arts* ; that he had learn'd no *Philosophy*, knew nothing of Scholastick *Divinity*, and but very lately acquainted him-

himself with no more than the the Rudiments of *Logick*.

WITH this Stock of Learning, his Uncle's Papers, and some Knowledge of Civil Law, the first Part of the Age of *Fauftus Socinus* was taken up. He had been fully instructed, as has been said, in his Uncle's Principles, before his going into *France*, to avoid the Storm that threaten'd ; namely, the *Inquisition*.

THE Uncle conceiv'd a very great Opinion of the Nephew, and discover'd to his Intimates, the Hopes he had that he wou'd successfully recommend and disperse his Doctrine. After the Death of *Lælius*, he return'd to *Italy*, and was entertain'd in the Court of the Duke of *Florence*, whose Favour and Esteem he obtain'd by the

Employments he discharg'd. There he continued for twelve Years. He was heard with Sighs to complain, that thereby he had made Shipwreck of the Flower of his Age, and voluntarily left the *Court*, and his native Country, to propagate and disseminate the *Socinian* Heresy.

IT was in the Year 1574, and of his Age the thirty-fifth, when from *Italy* he went into *Germany*: Resided three Years at *Brasil*, a City upon the *Rhine*, where with great Application he studied the Writings and Notes of his Uncle, which he refus'd not to own. When he had remain'd at *Brasil* to *An.* 1575, he enter'd into a Dispute concerning *Jesus Christ* the *Saviour*; not long after, he began another Disputation with *Francis Pucci-*

Puccius, in the Beginning of the Year 1578 at *Zurich*, and returning the same Year to *Brasil*, finish'd his Book *De Servatore*. He argued therein against *James Co-vet*, Minister of the *French Church* at *Basil*. This Treatise was printed by a Disciple of the Author; his Name was likewise plac'd before it, which had never appear'd in the Title of any Thing he writ; a Reason for that will fall in hereafter.

AT the same Time great Disturbances and Commotions were rais'd in the *Antitrinitarian Assemblies* in *Transylvania*, concerning the Opinion of *Francis David*, and others, relating to the Honour and Power of *Christ*. To put a Stop to which, *George Blandrata*, who had great Influence among the

Assemblies, and no less Interest with those who had the supreme Authority, in the same Year, *viz.* 1578, invited *Socinus* to come from *Basil* thither, as a fit Instrument to wean the principal Leader of the Faction, from so gross and pernicious an Error, which, that he might the more commodiously do, *Blandrata* hired a House, where they might lodge, and eat at the same Table, which they did for three quarters of a Year. But *Francis David* being more inclin'd to maintain his Credit among his Followers, than to hearken to *Socinus*, made it his Business, not only to justify his Error, in a private but publick Manner; for which he was imprison'd by the Command of the Prince of *Transylvania*, where it
was

was not long before he died. *Socinus*, whether innocent or not, was censur'd, as unable to overcome *Francis David* with any other Arms. When this Conference of theirs was ended, and exhibited to the *Transylvanian* Assemblies, in *May* 1579, *Faustus Socinus* the same Year, being then forty, repair'd to *Poland*, where he was ambitious of joining himself publicly to the Assemblies of the *Unitarians*; but not concealing his Dislike of some of their other Opinions, he suffer'd a severe and long Repulse: Nevertheless, writ in their Favour, when they were oppos'd.

MEANWHILE, by his frequent Disputations, he created himself many Enemies, especially by attacking *Jacob Paleologus*. The Book he writ against him, con-

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cerning the Civil Magistrate, was misrepresented to *Stephen*, King of *Poland*, as a seditious Libel against Magistracy ; whereas *Socinus*, in that Work, condemn'd all Authors who allow'd Subjects to rebel, or to pretend to make themselves Judges of the Question ; whether a Prince reigns tyrannically, or not. “ He writes there, said a Critick of great Name, “ rather like a Monk that sold his “ Pen to render the Protestant “ Reformation hateful, than an “ *Italian Fugitive*.” It furnish'd his Adversaries with a Pretext to irritate the King against him, tho' the Book was far enough from Sedition. He left *Racovia* upon it, where he had remain'd four Years, and retired to the Seat of a *Polish* Lord, named *Christopher Morsti-*

Morstinus, Lord of *Pawlikovi*:
Where, by the Privilege of the
Nobility of *Poland*, he was enter-
tain'd, and protected. His Patron
married his Daughter to him, and
of a Guest made him his Son, and
consequently his Safety seem'd esta-
blish'd by great Relations and Al-
liances. While he staid in the
Country, he writ against *Eutropi-*
us in Vindication of his own Prin-
ciples ; for which he was a daily
Sufferer.

HE had a Daughter born *Anno*
1587, in the 48th Year of his
Age ; after his Death, married
to *Stanislaus Wizzovats*, a Knight
of *Poland*. In *September* the same
Year he buried his Wife, and laid
it so much to heart, that it threw
him into a dangerous Fit of Illness,
which for some Months mightily
inter-

interrupted his Undertakings; and that nothing might be wanting to aggravate his Grief, at the same time almost, by the Decease of *Francis* great Duke of *Tuscany*, he was depriv'd of the Revenue he receiv'd from *Italy*; and indeed, not long before that, by the Vehemence of his Accusers, his Fortune was in Jeopardy; but by the Mediation of *Isabella Medicis*, the Great Duke's Sister, he had his Rents remitted to him, while the Duke her Brother liv'd, and they by Letters promis'd to receive him again, provided he would not set his Name to the Things he publish'd. Soon after, those Princes died, to his Misfortune; and every thing conspir'd to disturb him.

THERE was then a great Struggle between the Competitors for the

the Crown of *Poland*. The Times were troublesome, and the Licentiousness of contending Parties dangerous : For which reason he return'd to *Cracovia*.

As he had all along frequented Ecclesiastical Assemblies, he went *Anno* 1588, to a Synod in the Borders of *Lithuania*, where he disputed concerning the Death and Sacrifice of *Christ*, of *Justification*, the *Corruption* of *Nature*, and the *Invocation* of *Jesus Christ* ; on all which Articles he oppos'd the Orthodox Doctrines establish'd and receiv'd from the Beginning, and clandestinely drew some of the first Rank and Quality to embrace his new Refinements, and Interpretations of reveal'd Truth. Sundry Evils threaten'd him, while he then resided at *Cracovia* ; but principally

cipally after the publishing his Book *De Servatore*, the Hatred of many reviv'd, and was much exasperated.

IN the Year 1598, being indispos'd, and confin'd to his Chamber for the Recovery of his Health, the Rabble, animated by young Scholars, hal'd him out of his Lodgings, in a violent manner, half naked, and dragg'd him through the Market-place, and principal Streets, crying out for Justice; at length, by M. *Vadovitz*, Professor of *Cracovia*, he was, with great Difficulty, rescu'd from the Fury of the Mob; who plunder'd him at the same time of his Moveables, and all Things the enraged Vulgar could lay their Hands on. He lamented most the Loss of his Manuscripts, and particularly a Work
against

against Atheists ; but new Threats were added to what he had suffer'd by the Populace, which caused him to retire to a Village, about nine Miles distant, where he was received by *Abraham Blonski*, a Nobleman, at whose House, the latter End of Winter, then in his 65th Year, he died *Anno 1604*.

THIS is a short View of the Life of *Fauftus Socinus*. It is not material, perhaps, to say ought of his personal Qualities. *Przypcowski*, a *Polish* Knight, who was one of his Disciples, and wrote a Panegyrick, rather than a History of him, says, he acquir'd by his great Industry, a competent Share of Learning, tho' late. He adds likewise, that to applaud his Wit and Judgment would be superfluous, when so many Monuments of both
are

are at hand. He gives a very remarkable Instance of his great Memory, which he made appear in a Disputation he held with *Christopher Franken*. This Man, in a certain Synod, ambitious to shew the Superiority of his Learning and Parts, challenged, in a more haughty manner than he should have done, any of the Persons present, to enter the Lists of Disputation with him, despising the Erudition and Capacity of all without Exception. And the more to bear down and discourage any Antagonist, propos'd no less than fifty Arguments in a String, which he had premeditated, against the *Invocation of Christ*. This disturbed some, and they pitch'd on *Socinus* to answer this bold Challenger, who requir'd him, *viz. Socinus,*

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SOCINUS, confiding in his Memory, made no Use of his Pen, and having patiently heard them, immediately, in the very same Order they were pronounced, answered particularly and distinctly to each, exactly one after another, and so solidly, in the Opinion of the Hearers, that his Adversary could make no Reply; but confessing he was not so ready, and well prepar'd on the Subject, as he thought himself to be, to the Amazement of the whole Synod, not without Blushing and Confusion, withdrew.

As to the Form of his Body, the same Author says, " He was
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" of Stature, not exceeding what
" was

“ was just, but somewhat tall, thin,
“ of a cheerful, masculine Aspect.
“ In Eating and Sleep, very moderate ; easy of Access ; ready,
“ and even officious to serve his
“ Friends. The Injuries he received, and the Sensibility of his
“ Temper, he says concurr'd to
“ magnify his Patience.

HIS Constancy to his Principles, this Historian will have to be very remarkable, tho' attended with great Difficulties ; and is pleased to add, “ That the Constancy
“ and Resolution of *Luther*, *Loyola*, and others, was encouraged
“ by the Applause, the Aid, and
“ Assistance of *Princes*, and *Popes* ;
“ but that *Lælius* and *F. Socinus*
“ had no Countenance of Authority, no Combination of Party ;
“ no other Recommendation, but
“ their

“ their own Strictness, which was
 “ by many hated, and envied.”
 He concludes, by saying, “ That
 “ so many Monuments of their
 “ Wit, and Parts, would not suf-
 “ fer their Merit to be buried in
 “ Oblivion.” And lastly, “ That
 “ there is greater Danger, lest
 “ Posterity should confer too ma-
 “ ny, than too few Honours upon
 “ them.” *In which our Knight*
was very short of being a true Pro-
phet.

AFTER *Sigismund*, King of *Pol-*
land, had allow'd Liberty of Con-
 science to the Sects, that had broke
 with the Church of *Rome*: The
Unitarians, or *Anti-Trinitarians*,
 call'd also *Socinians*, from *Faustus*
Socinus, the Head of the Party,
 had divers Assemblies, for a confi-
 derable time, in *Poland* and *Li-*
 C *thuania*,

thuania; some in the great Towns of *Cracovia*, *Lublin* and *Novogrod*; others, in the Country, where Gentlemen had Estates. They made *Cracovia* their principal Residence, and there celebrated a yearly Synod, erected a College, and set up a Printing-house, and from their Press a great number of Books spread into foreign Countries. But this State of Prosperity was interrupted, *Anno* 1638. Some Scholars of their College at *Cracovia*, having broken down a wooden Cross, set up in a high Road; a Diet at *Warsaw* order'd the College to be demolish'd, their Church to be shut up, the Printing-house to be destroy'd, and the Ministers and Regents to be banish'd. By another Diet, *Anno* 1647, *Jonas Slichtingius* receiv'd Sentence of Banish-

Banishment for publishing a Book, intituled, *Confessio Christiana*, and the Book was burnt by the common Executioner. Notwithstanding these Disgraces, they had many Places of Exercise in that Kingdom, till the Year 1658, when a Law was made in a general Diet, by common Consent, as well of *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, as *Catholics*, whereby *Arianism* was proscrib'd, and the *Arians* and *Soci-nians* comprehended under the same Name, obliged either to abjure their Heresy, or leave the Kingdom, within two Years, which was granted them for selling their Effects. This Law was afterwards confirm'd, and the Day of their departing fixt to the 10th of *July*, *Anno* 1660.

AFTER this, they made many Attempts to settle in *Holland*, brought with them to *Amsterdam* a great many Books, both printed and in Manuscripts, which they began to translate into *Flemish*: All which the Magistrates having seiz'd, sent them to the *Academy of Leyden*, and after, to the States General. The Judgment of the Faculty of Divines at *Leyden* was, that those Writings differ'd but very little from *Mahometism*, and contain'd Blasphemies, not to be tolerated among *Christians*, without the utmost Impiety. They gain'd Profelytes notwithstanding, and their Books spread. To put a final Stop to all which, the Magistrates of *Amsterdam* having condemn'd some Writings of *Volkelius* to the Flames, the

the States made an Edict, whereby they forbid all Persons of what Degree or Condition soever, to introduce any of the *Socinian Heresies* into the Country, to communicate them to others, or to hold any Assemblies for that End, or Purpose. They declar'd, that all those who contraven'd their Order, for the first Offence, shou'd be banish'd out of the Province as Blasphemers, and Disturbers of the publick Peace. The Senate of *Utrecht* publish'd a like Edict: Some of them, no great Number, retir'd into *Prussia*, and the *Marquisate of Brandenburg*.

XIII. 22 - 10 - 1711

ERRATA.

*IN the Life of Socinus, p. xi. l. 15. for acrias read
aerias. p. xviii. l. 10. for 1639 read 1539. p. 59. l. 7.
blot out the Period after them, and place a Colon after
perfectly.*



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C 4

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AN

AN
ARGUMENT
FOR THE
AUTHORITY
OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE;
BY
SOCINUS.

REUM

AUTUM

1870



An Argument for the Authority of Holy Scripture.

CHAP. I.

The principal Point in Dispute propos'd. The Order and Manner of handling it. A Demonstration that the AUTHORITY of the Books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, cannot be justly doubted by those who believe the CHRISTIAN RELIGION. The first and chief Cause of Doubt Confuted.



ANY, even among those, ^{The Subject propos'd.} who profess the Name of JESUS CHRIST, doubt the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, and the Authority of the Holy Scriptures,

Scriptures, that is, the Books call'd the *Bible*, or the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT; and ask, why we are to believe those Things to be true, and rightly transmitted, that are contain'd therein, and propos'd to us, as Objects of Faith, thinking no sound Argument can be produc'd to make this evident.

THIS Question may be divided into two Heads. For, either those who thus doubt, and make this Query, otherwise allow the Religion of *Jesus of Nazareth* who is call'd *Christ*, to be true, or do not allow it; but either distrust the certain Truth of it, or doubt not in the least that it is utterly false. We will speak first to the *former* of these Heads, and then to the *latter*, that the whole Matter may be the more fully and distinctly explain'd.

He cannot doubt the OLD who receives the NEW TESTAMENT.

First, I say, then, if the Religion of *Jesus of Nazareth*, who is call'd *Christ*, be allow'd to be true, I cannot see how the Authority of the Books call'd the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, can reasonably be question'd. As to the OLD TESTAMENT, since that is apparently

rently confirm'd by the NEW, if the divine Authority of the latter shall be clearly demonstrated (that being granted which has been now said of the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, i. e. its being true) it will follow from thence undeniably, the *Old Testament* must be adjudg'd to have the same Authority ; especially where it appears not, or there can be no well grounded Suspicion the *Old Testament* has undergone any Corruption or Alteration, as will be more amply shewn in its Place.

Now, that it is very unreasonable to doubt the Authority of the *New Testament* (as if either the *History* or *Doctrine* of the *Christian Religion* were not faithfully deliver'd therein) may be made evident, if I am not mistaken, in the following Manner, whereby all Causes of Doubt, which may perhaps arise in the Mind of any Christian, commonly so call'd, will be effectually remov'd, and made void.

No Christian can justly question the Truth of the NEW TESTAMENT.

*Four Causes for suspecting the Books
of the NEW TESTAMENT.*

THERE seem to be four principal Reasons for suspecting the Authority of any Book whatsoever. The *first* is, if the Writer be of little or no Credit, or such, whose Fidelity and Science may be question'd. *Another*, if the true Writer of the Book be unknown. A *third*, if it be otherwise made appear, or there be any just Suspicion the Book hath been corrupted, or in any Respect alter'd or deprav'd. But a *fourth* and *last* is, if there be Testimonies of Men worthy of Faith, and therefore not to be rejected, that no Regard is to be given to that Book. If then it shall be demonstrated, that neither of these *four* Objections can lye against the Book call'd the NEW TESTAMENT: It will certainly be likewise manifest, its divine Truth or Authority, cannot, unless wrongfully and injuriously, be question'd.

The

The first of these Causes of Doubt remov'd, and the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT shewn to be worthy of the most absolute Faith, and above all Manner of Exception.

AS to the first Cause of Doubt, viz. *If the Writer be of little or no Credit, or such whose Fidelity and Knowledge cannot be question'd,* the Matter stands thus. To render the Writer of any Book unworthy of much Regard, or such, whose Integrity and Capacity is not to be rely'd on, chiefly comes from hence; either it must be made evident, or there must be some good Reason for Suspicion, that he did not rightly know what he writ, or did not write what he knew to be true: Or there must plainly appear some clear Indications of these in the Book it self; I mean, either of the Ignorance or Imposture of the Writer.

D

Now,

Now, in the first place, I would know, how it can be made out, or fairly suspected (unless from what may be collected out of the Books themselves) that the Writers of the *New Testament* were not perfectly acquainted with what they relate, or would not write Things as they knew them to be, that they did amiss through Ignorance or Imposture. Of this I can see no Proof.

*That the
Writers of
the New
Testament
writ all
Things
truly and
faithfully.*

For either we will admit the Writers of these Books to be the same, whose Names they respectively bear, or quite other Men; if other, let their Names be first produc'd, together with sufficient Evidence that they writ those Books, and not those to whom they have been by universal Consent ascrib'd: Then we shall see whether they were such to whom Faith is due, or not. For if any one shall alledge, it is enough, if nothing appears to evince, they were the Writers of this Book, who are commonly reputed so to be; I answer, This hath nothing to do with the *first* of the *four* Causes before-

*Answer to
an Excep-
tion.*

foremention'd, that can deservedly render the Authority of any Book dubious, of which Cause we now speak ; it belongs to the *second*, to be consider'd in its proper Place ; but is of no Validity to prove any Thing in this Part of our Disputation ; unless it be only to except, if any one perhaps shall argue from the Writers of the *New Testament* themselves, to prove the Authority of that Book ; which indeed is not done here, where only an Answer is return'd to what may be urg'd against their Authority, to the intent that the same being made void, the Authority of the Book may fall with it.

But to return to our Purpose ; if no sufficient Proofs can be found (as certainly there can be none) to demonstrate, that others wrote that Book, and not they to whom it is vulgarly ascrib'd, it undeniably follows, since it is taken for granted in this Place, that 'tis well known who the Authors of the *New Testament* were (for how can it be made manifest otherwise, or any just

These Writers examined, as to their Qualities or Conditions.

Suspicion, at least, be rais'd ; but only from what may be collected out of the Books themselves, that either those Writers were ignorant of, or did not with Fidelity enough deliver the Things therein contain'd, unless it be certain who the Writers were ?) it follows, they were really those who are taken so to be : If the same, let us consider their Qualifications, and the Nature of what they wrote ; that we may see, *first*, whether there be any manner of likelihood they were ignorant of the Truth of that they publish'd ; and *secondly*, whether there be any Ground to suspect they committed to Writing, what they knew to be notoriously false, or at least contrary to Truth. As to the several Pen-men of the NEW TESTAMENT, and their Writings.

The Writings of the four Evangelists.

Matthew and *John*, who wrote historically of *Jesus Christ*, were both of them his Disciples, his intimate Friends, and more familiar with him than the rest ; and of consequence perfectly knew not only those Things they

they related, but were present when most of them were done. *Mark* and *Luke*, who likewise publish'd the History of *Christ*, liv'd at the same Time and Place where *Jesus Christ* liv'd, during his Abode on Earth: And besides, one of them, namely *Mark*, was, as some think, first a Companion of *Paul* the Apostle, chosen by *Christ* in a singular Manner to publish his Doctrine; afterward a Disciple without doubt, and Companion of *Peter*, an Apostle of *Jesus Christ*, who liv'd in the greatest Intimacy with him, and an Eye-witness almost of all *Mark* writ: And indeed *Mark* himself writ nothing but what was dictated to him (if I may so say) by *Peter*. But the other, I mean *Luke*, was an Associate, and intimately acquainted with *Paul* beforemention'd, of whom he may be truly said to have receiv'd whatever needful to a perfect and clear Knowledge of Things, which any way related to the History of *Christ*.

The same *Luke* writ of what the Apostles acted after *Christ* left this World, *Acts of the Apostles*.

and chiefly of that which St. *Paul* did, whereof for the most part he was likewise an Eye-witness. And concerning the rest, he might be fully inform'd by the same *Paul*, as well as of many Things beside belonging to the other Apostles, and that whole *History* which *Paul* himself saw, and was thoroughly acquainted with. Moreover, *Luke* liv'd in the Time, and in those Places where these Matters were transacted; which of it self is enough to shew he perfectly knew the whole Truth of all before-mention'd, and could not be mistaken.

St. Paul's
Epistles.

Now, beside the former Writings, for the most part *Historical*, we have in our Hands Epistles of *Paul* the *Apostle* to certain Churches, or particular Persons, which generally contain *Doctrine* relating to the Religion of *Jesus Christ*; and moreover somewhat *Historical*, in reference to *Christ*, or to *Paul* himself, or to others out of the Church, as well as *Prophecies* some way or other appertaining to it. As to *Doctrine* then, who doubts but *Paul* certainly understood what he wrote,

wrote, since he was not only in a singular, but miraculous and divine manner, chosen by *Christ* to carry his Name and Doctrine throughout the World? Furthermore, *that Historical Part* of his Writings which belongs to *Jesus Christ*, is so intermix'd with *Doctrine*, the one cannot be separated from the other. As to what has respect to some out of the Church, *Paul* himself was then and there present. 'Tis to no great purpose to speak of what he relates concerning his own Person. Touching his *Prophecies*, in like manner, it cannot be thought, that he, who was by *Jesus Christ* favour'd in so high a degree, and so dear to him, should notwithstanding be ignorant of the Truth of Things to come, which he constantly profess'd his Knowledge of. So that the Authority of these *Epistles* also cannot reasonably be question'd.

There are likewise extant some other *Epistles* of *James*, *Peter*, *John* and *Jude*, all of them *Apostles* of *Christ*; who could not mistake, nor be Stran-

gers to those Matters they writ in their Epistles ; whether pertaining to the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, wherein they were all thoroughly instructed from the beginning almost to the end ; or to the *History of Jesus Christ*, of which some particular Passages are to be found in them, or to *Prophecies* (for some few are to be read there) concerning Futurities in regard to Christians. Wherefore neither can we, with Justice, withhold Faith to what is contain'd in these Epistles. There is annex'd to these an

*The Revela-
tion.*

extraordinary Book call'd the *Revelation*, consisting of a wonderful *Vision*, wherein many Events to come are foretold, obscurely enough, which chiefly have Respect to the Church of *Jesus Christ*. The Truth of that *Vision*, whether, or what it was, he must perfectly know who wrote it ; seeing he expressly affirms he had, and saw such a *Vision* ; the Writer might be *John* the Apostle, the same who penn'd the *History of Jesus Christ*, as is the common Opinion ; or *John* surnam'd *Mark*, of whom mention is made in the 15th Chapter

Chapter of the *Acts*, or some other Person ; of which we shall speak, when we come to the second Cause of Doubt, where somewhat will be offer'd touching the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, which is not allow'd by all to be of *Paul*. In the mean time to return to our Purpose.

We have shewn then, as to the several Books of the *New Testament*, there is not one of them, whose Truth or Falshood the Writer himself did not perfectly know. But here it may be objected, this will be true, when it appears those Writers were the same I have affirm'd them to be ; but that this very much is, or may certainly be question'd. I answer, as before ; if it be doubted, or not, whether the true Names of the Writers of those Books are prefix'd to them, this, 'tis plain, belongs not to the first ; but only to the second Cause of Doubt : For when it is asserted (as is done in this first Part) that it is known who the Writer of any Book was, *that* does not signify it is known by what Name he is

Answer to an Objection concerning the Knowledge of the Apostles in what they writ.

to

to be called, which is of little or no moment to judge whether he is to be believ'd or not. But at present we would be understood to mean, that his Condition and external Qualities are known, which is of some importance herein, and will serve to shew his other internal Conditions, such as have respect chiefly to this Matter. There has been enough said here then to prove, that if we look upon the Writers of the *New Testament*, in themselves, it cannot be denied, they very well knew the Truth of what they committed to Writing, and therefore we must certainly conclude, they mistook not in the least through Ignorance.

Shewm

*Shewn from the Nature of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
that the APOSTLES writ with
utmost Fidelity.*

2. **L**ET us see now, whether it be likely, that such Men should publish what they knew to be false. It may seem indeed to be enough to create some Suspicion, that they were not so very faithful in Matters of History, because they relate what they themselves were interested in. In the Word *History* here, I comprehend *Divine Revelations* also; which, as we find, some of them say they had. Now since they were all not only true Christians; but likewise either themselves, or those at least with whom they were most intimate, most dear to Christ above all Men (as in this Place is taken for granted) there is no Room for that Cause of Suspicion. For every one knows, and must own, that among the principal *Precepts* of the *Christian Religion,*

Religion, it is required that every Man be true and faithful, and not impose upon others, nor have recourse to Lies in any Matter whatsoever, that every one do not only detest the Thought of being a Deceiver in Concerns of a publick Nature (as those most certainly are, who designedly and industriously write *Histories* they know to be false ;) but likewise abhor no less the Guilt of Sacrilege, Blasphemy, or even Negligence of Things sacred, or of being void of the Fear of God, as he must surely be, who writing a *History* of Religion, publishes Matters, of the Untruth of which he himself is fully satisfied, and sins not therein thro' Ignorance, but malicious Design.

*Objection
retorted.*

Therefore, though they were interested in what they writ, this is so far from lessening, that it augments the Opinion of their Integrity. For they had no greater Advantage in it, than heartily to embrace *Jesus Christ* and his Religion ; and therefore were such as could not knowingly and industriously lye. So that, if this diminishes
not,

not, but magnifies their Credit in the *Historical*, it must do no less in the *Doctrinal* Part, which they could have no Bias in the least to deliver otherwise than they knew it to be. For what *Glory, Profit* or *Pleasure* could they gain by wilfully deceiving others, and leading them into Perdition, when they might have been their true and certain Guides to conduct them in the way of Salvation, wherein they were thoroughly instructed, and continually walked themselves?

No REPUGNANCY nor CONTRADICTION in the DOCTRINE, nor HISTORY of the NEW TESTAMENT.

3. **W**E are next to enquire, without considering who those Writers were, whether it may be certainly known out of their Writings, or any just Suspicion rais'd from thence, that they were ignorant of, or would not declare the Truth in what they wrote;

wrote; and that Suspicion or Certainty, which may arise out of the Writings themselves, must of necessity be bottom'd on their teaching therein or publishing Inconsistencies that plainly appear to be false. But he who would handle this Subject fully, will be obliged to examine all the pretended suspected Places apart: An Undertaking too tedious and prolix for the design'd Brevity of this Work. Wherefore here it may suffice to treat this Matter only summarily, by certain principal Heads. And the rather, for that if in handling the *Second Cause*, we shall prove (as we hope to do) the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT to be the same, who are commonly esteem'd so to be, we need not be at any great pains in this Part; as the Thing it self will discover.

Distinction to be observed here.

I say then, that in respect to *Repugnancies* or Contrarieties, there is not one Instance to be given, which is not so in Semblance, rather than Truth and Reality, or only in Passages of very small moment and no account. And those

those Places that may seem to interfere, but indeed do not, are such chiefly as relate to *Doctrine*; wherein there is not only no real Repugnancy or Inconsistence; but on the contrary, so much Harmony and Agreement shines in it, that even this ought to be enough to gain these Writings greater Authority, than any other Book has or can lay claim to, wherein any *Doctrine* is deliver'd. Seldom or never can there be found in Writings, and those but short too, and of one Man only, so much Concord and Uniformity of *Doctrine*, as in this Book of the NEW TESTAMENT, which at the same time consists of such Diversity of Writings of so many Persons.

Moreover, the Repugnancies or Diversities, whether real or in appearance, are in Points of small moment relating to *History*. As to which, we need do no more than see what the Bishop, surnam'd *Chrysostom*, writes in the Preface to his Commentaries on the Gospel of *Matthew*. Where, if I rightly remember, he answers fully to
this

*Testimony
of St.
Chrysostom.*

this Objection of some, against the Authority of the four *Evangelists*, and believing what they depose : The Sum of what he says, is, " That the *Evan-*
 " *gelists* do not differ at all in those
 " Points of *History*, which are of any
 " Concernment ; and if they vary in
 " Trivials, this ought not to detract
 " from, but confirm their Credit and
 " Authority. For, hence it appears,
 " they did not combine to invent what
 " they writ ; and therefore must be
 " certainly divers Writers, who, mo-
 " ved and compelled by the Truth of
 " what they knew had pass'd, com-
 " mitted the same to Writing, inge-
 " nuously, fairly, and openly, altho'
 " in few Instances of no Weight (the
 " Truth of which some might more
 " exactly remember than the rest) they
 " might perhaps write somewhat diffe-
 " rently, or very unlike each other."
 Thus he.

Demon-
strative
Supposi-
tion.

But we will reserve this for another Chapter, concerning our whole Question ; where we shall not take for granted, that the *Christian Religion* is true,

as is done here in this *first* Chapter: And this being suppos'd, 'tis no way reasonable, that from any little Variation which may be found in very light Matters in those Writers, who for so long time, and by such universal Consent, have been approv'd by *Christians*, any one should take Occasion to doubt their Integrity and Knowledge in those Passages where they most unanimously concur, and particularly in that which every one of them actually relates; unless it be known from some other Quarter, or for other good Cause, that in those Things they sometimes wrote what in no wise is to be believ'd, which hath never hitherto been prov'd.

*Shewn that the Apostles deliver'd
nothing false, nor cited Places of
the OLD TESTAMENT amiss.*

IN Order thereto, let us consider those Things that in themselves may appear to be false. Here we
E say

say as before, that either nothing of this is to be found, or it is of so small Weight, as ought not to depreciate the Credit of those Writers in any Matters at least of Moment or Importance. As to *Doctrine*, it may be constantly affirm'd, I believe, that nothing can be discover'd to be *evidently* false; for otherwise there would not be now, nor in Times past, so many prudent and learned Men, who without any doubt, did not, nor do not stick to give entire Faith to every Part of those Writings which has respect to *Doctrine*. Nothing likewise is to be read therein, that any one can find *probable* Reasons to contradict or disprove, provided he has a competent Knowledge of *Christianity*, and owns its Truth: Nor is that to be done any other Way whatever, than by producing *Decrees* or *Axioms* of the *Christian Religion*, opposite to something written in the NEW TESTAMENT. But where shall he meet with such *Decrees* or *Axioms*? Or what Authority can he alledge to

confirm them, that will not be much inferior to the NEW TESTAMENT itself? In which, as to what appertains to Things external, all the Knowledge is founded, that Christians have of the *Decrees* and *Axioms* of their Religion.

Will he do it by shewing by *Reasons* or *Authority* of the OLD TESTAMENT, of what Kind those *Decrees* and *Axioms* ought to be; and that they are wholly, or in part, found otherwise written in the NEW? This, I am persuaded, no-body can do: For as to *Reasoning*, that is a Way too uncertain to be rely'd on, in a Matter which depends on divine Revelation, as does the *Christian Religion*. And in regard to the *Authority* of the OLD TESTAMENT, it is not much to be magnified here, unless it be first known in what Sense in divine Revelation those *Oracles* of the OLD TESTAMENT, or Passages therein, brought to prove *that*, have been taken. Forasmuch as it is certain that no-body can by any means seriously receive the *Christian Religion*,

*Answer to
Objection.*

but must confess withal, that in the Revelation of it, 'tis clearly acknowledged, that the *Prophecies* concerning JESUS CHRIST, and Things relating to him, and consequently to the Christian Religion, are, at least in some Part, of another Meaning from what the Letter of the OLD TESTAMENT seems to import; and such too, as without the Revelation of the NEW, nobody could even have suspected any thing of.

*The Opin-
ion of
JUDAI-
ZERS
confuted.*

We are not to mind a Sort of Men, who with their Tongues profess Christianity; but in Heart and Actions deny it; being *Jews* in Effect, or full of a *Jewish* Spirit, which both Fame, History, perpetual and certain Experience no less shew to be always diametrically opposite to the *Christian* Spirit: For these Persons assert, there is nothing in the *Prophecies* which ought not wholly to be understood according to the Letter, which is demonstrated to be false, from some of those Places of the
OLD

OLD TESTAMENT they themselves confess must be understood of *Christ*.

'Tis very true, indeed, that those *Prophecies* had for the most part their first Event, or certain literal Completion, according to the bare Meaning of the Words, in others beside *Christ*; but as they had their Event in *Christ*, another Signification was understood than the literal Sense of the Words implied; although in many such like *Prophecies*, what was in some manner fullfill'd in other Persons, according to a certain figurative, but very customary Signification of the Terms; that I say, is, or hereafter will be perfectly terminated in *Christ*, according to the sound and precise Meaning of the Words; divested of all Figures of Speech, which common Use would otherwise bear, of which, *viz.* of the compound Sense of certain Oracles, many Examples occur in *Holy Writ*.

But we are not here to treat of this. If by that Sort of Men now mention'd, *i. e.* *Judaizers*, or any

*Of the true
Meaning
of the Pre-
phesies of
the OLD
TESTA-
MENT.*

*Conclusion
of the first
Chapter.*

other who profess themselves *Christians*, Testimonies of the OLD TESTAMENT are produc'd to prove, that in the NEW TESTAMENT there are some Things pertaining to *Doctrine*, contrary to those which it was predicted in the OLD would come to pass in the Time of *Christ*; to all this (with the Divine Permission) we will particularly answer; which Answer we would have extend to those also, who possibly may object against the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT, that in citing Places of the OLD, they did not apply them rightly and properly to the Purpose they quoted them for; but made it their Business to interpret them otherwise than their true Meaning would bear, and as if, by so doing, they uttered Things which appear to be evidently false. So much for the *first* Cause or Pretence of doubting the Authority of the NEW TESTAMENT.

CHAP.



C H A P. II.

The Second Cause of Doubting remov'd, by shewing that we cannot be ignorant who the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT were, which is not necessary to be universally known.



IS Time now to speak particularly to the *Second Cause*, for which the Authority of any Book may be call'd in question, and that is Ignorance who the real *Writer* was; for some will say, although they acknowledge the Truth of the Christian Religion, who will assure us the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT were written by those whose

Objection answer'd concerning the Uncertainty of the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT.

Names they bear in the Prefaces and Inscriptions, as vulgarly is believ'd? And since we have no Assurance of this, does it not plainly follow, that 'tis uncertain who writ them, although no other can be nam'd so likely as they? And if so, what can oblige us to give unquestionable Faith to those Writings, either in Matters of *Doctrine* or *History*? For true and solid Faith *historically* given to any Book, relies chiefly on the Author's being thoroughly acquainted with all the Facts as they were transacted, and also of his being a Person not prone to lie or prevaricate; and of this either Certainty or Science of the Writer, how can we have any Assurance when unknown? For like Reason in respect to *Doctrine*, if Credit is to be given to any Author, he must, before all Things, be known to have been well instructed in the *Doctrine* at least he undertakes to treat of, that he may deserve to be believ'd: But to know this (if it may be known) is it not necessary it should

should not be doubted who the Writer was ?

I answer, that in all this Reasoning, ^{Twofold} two Things are affirm'd or taken for ^{Answer.} granted, which are both to be deny'd and rejected as false. *One* is, that we have no Knowledge who the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT were. The *other*, that when the Writer of any Book is unknown, nothing almost remains to support its Credit, either in Relation to Matters *historical* or *doctrinal*: Let us examine each of these in Order.

By perpetual and uninterrupted Consent of Historians, it is manifest who the Writers of the NEW TESTAMENT were.

TO shew the first Assertion to be false, I say, if no Author of any Writing of very great Antiquity be unknown, most certainly the Authors of all the Writings almost of the NEW TESTAMENT are not

not unknown : Yes, the Authors of these are more certainly known, than of any other Book : And 'tis indeed strange, that few or none should have the Assurance to deny, or even doubt, whether any Book of what Antiquity soever, *had* the Author to whom it has ever been ascrib'd by common Consent, unless compell'd by some very strong Reasons or Testimonies ; and that there should be some notwithstanding to be met with at this Day, that either wholly deny, or pretend to doubt, whether those were the Authors of the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT, who from the Beginning have been esteem'd so to be, and for the most part appear to have been the Writers from the very Writings themselves ; when at the same time they have no Evidence, Testimony, nor Reason to induce them to disown or dispute it ; and there is less Ground to doubt the Writers of these Books, than of any other like Writings whatsoever. But to know the Author of any Book of long stand-
ing

ing depends on the Verdict of those who liv'd when, or not long after it appear'd, and rather on the constant and perpetual Opinion of learned Men, than any Thing else. What Books are there of so much Antiquity, that have so many Testimonies of this kind? What Writings can produce such a continual Consent and Agreement of grave and prudent Men to certify who the Writers were, as the NEW TESTAMENT.

Let what * *Eusebius* says, touching this Matter, in many Places of his *Ecclesiastical History*, be heard; and it will evidently appear, that even to the Age of the same *Eusebius*, for the Space of about two hundred and fifty Years after those Writings were publish'd, there never was one in the Church who doubted but the *four* Gospels which we have; the Book of the *Acts* of the Apostles; all

* See Euseb. in 3 *Hist. C.* 3, 4, 25. and *Book 5, C. 8.* and *B. 6. C. 18, &c.*

the *Epistles* likewise which are said to be of *Paul* the Apostle (except that to the *Hebrews*) the first also of *Peter* the Apostle, and the first of *John* the Apostle; none doubted, I say, but all these were writ by those very Men to whom they are now vulgarly attributed; by such, as in examining the *first* Cause, or Pretence of doubting, we have describ'd them to be; and it will be understood moreover, that there were many other Writers who either liv'd at that time, or but a little while after those Books first appear'd, who left it behind them openly testified, that the Authors were the very same whose Names they bear. Which we now see, in a great measure, by those Writings of the Ancients, that have come to our Hands, namely, of *Justin*, *Irenæus* and *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who liv'd all three, especially *Justin*, near the Apostolick Times. Likewise all along, continually after, great Numbers of discreet Men unanimously agreed that the Thing was so: As, from *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Origen*,
Eusebius,

Eusebius, Basil, Jerom, Austin, and many others, appears: Of whom to speak more here would be to no purpose.

Add hereunto, that although there have been so many and great *Dissensions* in the *Christian* Religion, there never was (as far as authentick History and Tradition inform us) any prudent and grave Man, among those who openly and frankly profess'd the Name of *Jesus Christ*, who doubted, whether the foremention'd Writings were indeed theirs whose they are said to be. * We read, 'tis true, of some in those early Times, rather to be deem'd *Jews* than *Christians*, who rejected the Epistles of *Paul*. But even those never denied them to be really his. Nay, they declar'd their not receiving them to be for no other Reason, but because *Paul*, who was known to write them, was, as they said, a Traitor to the Divine Law deliver'd by *Moses*. And

The foregoing confirmed.

* See Euseb. B. 3. C. 27. and B. 6. C. 28. and Iren. B. 1. C. 26, &c. concerning the Ebionites.

there

there are some such now possess'd with a *Jewish* Spirit, concerning whom we have intimated somewhat above. But beside this, the very same Men made no great account of the Writings of our four *Evangelists*, those of *Matthew* excepted. And others, not unlike these or worse, did not receive divers Things in the Writings before mention'd : But we never read that any ever denied those to be the Writers of them, to whom they have always been universally ascribed.

Answer to Objections concerning certain dubious Books of the NEW TESTAMENT.

IT may be said, that granting we cannot justly doubt who the fore-number'd Writers of the *New Testament* were ; we may very reasonably question who wrote the rest, which are not of the same Order : For the Ancients themselves were not certain of this, and some are under the same
Distrust

Distrust now. To which I answer, ^{First Answer.} *first*, that if all those Writings are rejected, there would remain enough in Point of Religion, if it plainly shall appear, that all the other ought to be receiv'd (I mean those, the Writers of which there is not now, nor ever was any doubt of;) forasmuch as there is nothing of any moment in one, which is not in the other; and indeed the Epistles of St. *Paul* the Apostle alone, call'd his unquestion'd Epistles, that never were denied to be of *Paul*, even by those who rejected them of old, are sufficiently decisive in all Things, that may be disputed to any good Purpose or Advantage in the *Christian* Religion; as Practice and Experience in those Matters will teach every one. Which is enough to be said here.

But *then* I add, concerning the last Epistle of *Peter*, and those of *James* and *Jude* (each of which in the very Beginning has his Name express'd, to whom it is attributed as the Writer of it (as far as from History and other Indications can be collected) were question'd,

^{Second Answer concerning the Epistle of James and Jude and the 2d of Peter; See Euseb. B. 3. C. 3, 25. and B. 6. C. 38, &c.}

ftion'd at first, for this Reason chiefly; because they were not found till the other Writings were compil'd into one Volume, and it was determin'd, that those alone, and no other, should be esteem'd worthy of Faith, as to what related to the *History* and *Doctrine* of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles. But afterwards, in Process of Time, it being known, by proper Discoveries, that those Epistles were theirs, whose Names they carry, they were number'd with the other Canonical and Apostolick Writings. The Epistle indeed of *James* had the Preference, as may be seen in the *Syriac* Versions wherein that is extant, but neither of the other: Somewhat possibly of more Certainty concerning it was found earlier, than of the other Epistles of the same Order.

Of the 2d and 3d Epistle of John; see Euseb. ib. Now, as to the two latter Epistles of *John*, true it is, they were not so universally acknowledg'd, and taken to be of that Apostle; but esteem'd as such for the most part, and were even by those who doubted the Writer, generally

rally approv'd, and thought worthy of Faith. It being known perhaps from the Beginning, that they deserv'd this Honour, at least, from those few into whose Hands they fell. But the more Time run on, so much the more firmly still, and constantly it was believ'd, that both these and the other above nam'd had the same Authors, who were vulgarly reputed so to be ; inso-much, that for many Ages (even while there were Dissensions of great moment in the Christian Church, and after those Dissensions ceas'd, down to us) scarce any Man intelligent in Matters of this kind, ever doubted concerning these, or the aforementioned Writings. Tho' it must be confess'd, the more remote we are from the Time in which those Works were written, the further we must be from sure Monuments and Indications of each of the Authors of them : Nevertheless, the *perpetual* and common *Consent* about those Authors (especially of those very Persons, who in other respects not only differ'd among themselves,

F

but

but held quite contrary Opinions, which all of them contended to be agreeable and consonant to the Writings we speak of) shews, that the Acknowledgment and Reception of them was not fortuitous or accidental, but constituted and confirm'd upon evident and infallible Testimonies, which became daily more and more solid and apparent.

Of the Epistle to the Hebrews; see Euseb. B. 3. C. 38. and B. 6. C. 18.

Touching the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, it cannot be denied, that to this very Day (nay much more now than in former Ages) it is, and hereafter will be doubted who writ it; for the common Opinion that imputes it to *Paul*, labours under many and great Difficulties. I own my self to be one of those (without Prejudice be it spoken) who can hardly be brought to believe it to be of that Apostle. For beside other Reasons, which incline me to be of this Opinion, the whole Way and Method, in which the Author of that Epistle writes, is different throughout from the Manner of *Paul*; tho' otherwise it be in it self equally

equally sacred and divine; to say nothing now of the Stile, and what the *Greeks* call the *Character* of that Epistle; which almost all, who are skill'd in the *Greek* language, assert, is very unlike the *Character* and Stile of the other Epistles of *Paul*: There are likewise some at this time, who will have it to be written in the *Jewish* Tongue; notwithstanding many, and those very evident Signs to the contrary, to be found in the Epistle itself. I therefore ingenuously confess, that there are Reasons for doubting, whether it be of that Author to whom it is ascrib'd by the more common Consent; or rather of *Luke*, or *Barnabas*, *Apollos*, or some other Person.

*A Book may be authentick, whose
Writer is unknown.*

BUT nevertheless (that we may ^{Third Answer.} speak in the mean time to what we said was falsely assum'd in the Reasoning, wherein this *Second* Cause of
F 2 Doubt,

Doubt, or of with-holding Assent from any Book was explain'd ;) I say, that altho' the Name of the *Author* of any Writing be unknown, such Writing is not therefore to be deem'd of no Authority, or even of less Credit, in Matters either of *History* or *Doctrine*, than if the *Author* were known ; provided it be certain, that the Writing was taken to be true, worthy of Faith, and to be rely'd on by them, who were well acquainted with the Truth of the Things contain'd therein. And this is the Case of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. For that Epistle, in those early Times, when many were living who had been conversant with the Apostles themselves, as plainly may be gathered out of Histories (although some of the *Romish* Church, and the Church of *Rome* itself, may contradict it) was generally approv'd by all Christians, so that those very Persons of the opposite Opinion, dissented from the other, because they would not allow it to be written by *Paul*, rather than for any other Reason, which in
itself

itself could any way depreciate its Authority. That this Opinion was anciently very much lik'd, the *Syriac Version* of the *New Testament* of greatest Antiquity, among other Things, makes appear; because 'tis known to be extant in that Book.

The *Apocalypse*, or Revelation, remains, which has been always by common Consent imputed to *John* the Apostle and Evangelist. Many have doubted it notwithstanding: But *Justin*, who liv'd near the Time when it was writ, quotes it as the Work of the same *John*, and as *Eusebius* plainly testifies, ascribes it to him. And *Irenæus*, who flourish'd but a little while after *Justin*, and who likewise, as he himself affirms, was in being at the Time almost when the *Vision* we speak of happen'd to that Writer, not only expressly asserts, that it was the Writing of that Apostle (which *Eusebius* witnesses by citing the very Words of *Irenæus*) but withal plainly says, that it was confirm'd by the Testimony of those who personally knew

Of the Apocalypse; see Euseb. B. 4. C. 78. and B. 5. C. 3. and B. 6. C. 18. and B. 7. C. 25.

John. Wherefore it seems not agreeable to Reason, for some small or even great Dissimilitude of Stile us'd in the other Writings of the same *John*, being of a quite different Nature or Subject (which perhaps of all Arguments brought to prove that Writing to be his, is the most prevalent:) I say, it is not therefore consonant to Reason, for any one to question its being his Work, especially when there are so many other Testimonies and Conjectures for the sounder Opinion; insomuch that those very Men, who absolutely denied this to be the Work of the aforesaid Apostle, and rejected it of old, were constrain'd to confess it written by such a one as would have it be thought, that *John* really was its Author, which may suffice for the *Second Cause* of doubting, &c.



C H A P. III.

*The Third Cause of doubting remov'd,
and Reasons assign'd to demon-
strate, that the Books of the NEW
TESTAMENT were never cor-
rupted nor deprav'd.*

CORRUPTIONS divided into cer-
tain Kinds, from all which the
Books of the NEW TESTA-
MENT are exempt.



THIRD REASON why the
Authority of any Book may
be question'd, is this, if it be
evident, or there be any just
Cause of Suspicion the Book had been
alter'd or deprav'd: Now here of ne-
cessity it must be *first* observ'd, whe-
ther that Depravation be of the whole
History of the whole *Doctrine*, or of

some particular Places, whereby neither *History* nor *Doctrine* could be altered: For if it was of some Part only of the *History* or *Doctrine*, or even of some of the fundamental Places of either, in which the Alteration was made, that would easily appear, for there would be no Connexion or Agreement of those Places with the rest; so that the Change cou'd not be hid, especially in *Doctrine*. A manifest Repugnancy wou'd be apparent in that Book, or at least very little Consistence with it self. But we have prov'd before, and are ready to prove further, there is no such Repugnancy to be met with in the whole Book of the NEW TESTAMENT; but every where a most wonderful Concord rather, and Harmony is found; insomuch, that this alone (especially if it be well consider'd how many Writers and various Writings are contain'd therein) is enough to render it worthy of the greatest Faith to any judicious Person; therefore in such particular Parts or Places, there can be no Corruption.

Now

Now it's impossible a Depravation should be made in the whole *Doctrine* or *History*, if what has been said before remains firm, namely, that those Writings were truly theirs to whom they are attributed; otherwise they wou'd not be theirs, but the Writings of others, by whom the whole *History* and *Doctrine* wou'd have been corrupted; but if the Depravation be of some particular Passages, whereby *neither* cou'd be chang'd, of what Moment or Efficacy is this to bar the giving Credit to all the rest that is of Weight and Consequence? For if it be said, that from any Depravations made in smaller Matters, it may be justly fear'd the same may happen in greater: I answer, that here it is taken for granted, this neither did, nor ever cou'd fall out in Things of considerable Moment, for a Reason before given.

It

It cannot be prov'd by Testimonies of Credit, that the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT have been corrupted.

BUT let us see further what *Proofs* and *Conjectures* there may be of Depravation, either in whole or in part of the Writings of the NEW TESTAMENT. As to *Proofs*, they must either come from the Testimonies of Men worthy of Credit, or from solid Reasons; but no such Testimonies can be produc'd, in the least, to be believ'd: Nay, the great Esteem and Veneration of these Writings, among *Christians* of any Account in the most ancient Times, evidently discover they did not believe them to be deprav'd in any Respect. Others of the contrary Opinion of Merit to be rely'd on, are no where to be found; for if they are not *Christians*, they might possibly raise groundless Cavils and Objections, out of ill Affection or
Igno-

Ignorance, to invalidate the Truth of the *Christian* Religion, which in this Chapter of our Question, we take for granted to be unquestionable: But if they are *Christians* of little or no Note nor Authority, of what Importance can their Testimony be?

Neither can it be prov'd by any Reasons.

SOLID Reasons moreover of sufficient Validity to prove this Corruption and Depravation, I can see none; for if any will attempt by Arguments to collect it out of Things manifestly false, repugnant, or incoherent to be read in the NEW TESTAMENT, it has been said already, that no such Thing is to be found there, or such as is of no Consequence; and therefore unfit to create even a Suspicion of any Corruption truly so call'd, and which really depraves either *Doctrine* or *History*.

If

*Of the Use
of various
Readings.*

If some perhaps be for proving it from various *Readings*, I answer, that although of necessity one *Reading* must be true, the rest false; yet it cannot therefore be said those Writings are deprav'd in their Substance: Nay, on the contrary, it may be safely affirm'd, they have been very diligently and faithfully preserv'd. For no Writing is extant, which by length of Days, and various incidental Causes one Way or other, is not alter'd in a Syllable or a Letter in many Respects: Wherefore, among Books of Antiquity, *that* shou'd be thought less deprav'd, of which there are various *Readings*; it being very likely, that in all those Places Time shall have alter'd, the true Remains even amongst the various *Readings*, which a prudent Person, by the Guidance of Reason, and Collation of other like Passages, may, without much difficulty discover and embrace. But *that* is to be taken as more corrupt, of which there is no various *Reading* at all: I speak of Writings that have fallen into several Hands, and
where-

whereof there must by consequence be many Copies, of which Kind, above all other, are perhaps the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT. For how many ancient Books have we, of whose true Meaning in numberless Places we shou'd not probably doubt as we now do, if their various *Readings* had come to our Notice: Nor wou'd there be any Need to perplex ourselves too much to find how this or that Passage ought to be read, when it clearly may appear to be impossible it should be there written, as it is now commonly seen.

That the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT have been corrupted, is not to be evinc'd by any probable Conjecture.

AS to Conjectures concerning the Depravation of the Books we speak of, if it shall be said that in the Space of many Ages, in which so many Copies were taken, they might be alter'd :

alter'd : This indeed I will not directly deny ; but at the same time must affirm, that some Signs or Marks of that Alteration may appear from various *Readings*, enough to shew what and where it is. If any shall alledge it is very likely too, that those who among the rest obtain'd the highest *Principalities* in the Christian Religion throughout the World, whose Decisions prevail'd even in all Matters Ecclesiastical for so many Ages in which they reign'd, might in many Places corrupt, or very much alter the Books of that Religion, by accommodating the Words of them to their own Purpose: I answer as before, and do not deny, that it is very probable they might attempt as much, or sometimes think to effect it : But then I add, that so great a Number of Copies dispers'd in almost all Parts of the Universe in various Languages ; so many Doctors likewise, who in early Times publish'd either Explanations or Commentaries on them, or writ Things relating to the Christian Religion, by whom Words

or

or Sentences are so very frequently cited out of these Writings, would not permit *that*. Of which a manifest Indication may be this, *viz.* that there is no Opinion among the several Sects of Christians, which produced Disputes of old, for a long time, that may not, from the same Books which they approve as preserv'd by themselves, be taken and disputed as before; and that People innumerable glory at this Day to have detected, as they say, out of those Writings the Tyranny and Falsity of numberless Opinions, impos'd and receiv'd among them, by whom they have been hitherto chiefly kept by those who are subject to the Church of *Rome*.

Although moreover both against this, or any Conjectures that can be brought to prove any Corruption of these Books, there is a certain other Conjecture, of far more weight, to oppose them with, and at once sufficient to destroy and subvert them all. It is this, which ought to be look'd upon as more than probable, namely, that

Prov'd from the Providence of God, that the Books of the New Testament were not corrupted.

God,

*Against
an Excep-
tion.*

God, whose Goodness, Power and Providence is infinite, would not permit those Writings to be deprav'd by impious Hands, that contain the Knowledge of himself, of his Will and our Salvation, which he has imparted to Mankind in all Times since the World began, and by the truly pious always receiv'd as such, that is, as *Holy Scriptures*, wherein that Knowledge of the divine Will is explain'd. I say, it is not likely God should permit those *Scriptures*, to be corrupted by the impious. Whoever shall deny this to be most probable, must of necessity deny either the Truth of the Christian Religion against what is here taken for granted, or that the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT were in fact written by those, who are, and always have been esteem'd the Writers of them, which is now sufficiently prov'd, and even against what in this Disputation concerning any Depravation of those Writings, is now to be thought firm and establish'd. Wherefore without multiplying Words about this *Third Cause,*

Cause or Pretence of Doubt, we may take Leave to proceed ; especially since we must speak of it again when we treat separately of the OLD TESTAMENT, where will be added what may have been omitted here.





C H A P. IV.

*The Fourth and Last Cause of
Doubt remov'd, by shewing that
no Christian ever question'd the
Authority of the Books of the
NEW TESTAMENT.*

*No Evi-
dence of
such Doubt
among
Christians.*



TH E *Fourth* and *Last* Cause of Doubt remains, which we will briefly dispatch. Forasmuch as there are no Testimonies extant of Men worthy of Credit in this Matter, as I know of, that Faith is not to be given to the Writings of the NEW TESTAMENT, although the Christian Religion be true; and indeed, if it cou'd plainly appear from authentick Histories, that any of the ancient *Christians*, whose Sanctity as well as Intelligence therein, were very well known, had but barely declar'd

clar'd (even without assigning any Reason) that those Writings were not worthy of Credit ; *that* alone would have been sufficient to deprive them of universal Faith, or to render it very dubious, and to be suspected at least. But as it has been now asserted this was never yet prov'd from History, neither could any such Thing come to our Knowledge, since there never was an Instance of a true *Christian*, commonly so esteem'd, who question'd the Authority of those Writings in general, much less affirm'd, that in things sacred, or belonging to Christianity, we are not to confide in, and adhere to the holy *Scriptures*, as the Arbitrators of our Religion ; I speak of such as were always reputed true *Christians*, to exclude some that are so in Name only ; but *Jews* in the main, who of old, if they did not reject all, yet disclaim'd the principal Writings, and especially St. *Paul's* Epistles. Such heretofore were almost all the *Ebionites*, who obstinately adhered to the Law of *Moses*, as the only Way to Salvation ;

*Answer to
an Exception
concerning
the Ebionites.*

for which Reason they not only despis'd, but absolutely curs'd *Paul*, stil'd him an Apostate from the Law, as having shew'd little or no Veneration to it. At the same time, as has been before observ'd, they deny'd not in the least that those Epistles were writ by *Paul*, according to the vulgar Acceptation; but their being so well known to be his, was the Motive for their most obstinately condemning them. And those *Hereticks*, as they are most ignorant of the Christian Religion by a *Hebrew* Name, were therefore call'd *Ebionim*, that is, *Poor*, as to *Intelligence* of Things *sacred*: So for the same Cause, they were wont to reject almost all the NEW TESTAMENT, except the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, or *Nazarenes*, and some took even that to be spurious. They had no better Opinion of JESUS CHRIST, than of any other commonly receiv'd *Prophet*; most of them thought him to be no more than a mere Man, the Son of *Joseph* and *Mary*, after the common Course of Natural Generation;

on ; and that his Office was only prophetic, temporal, and earthly ; but not royal and priestly, not eternal and heavenly ; or they look'd on him as one they believ'd to be sent of God into the World, only to explain the *Mosaick* Law more clearly and perfectly of them. *Irenæus*, in his first Book against *Hereticks*, Chapter 26 ; and *Eusebius*, in his third Book of *Ecclesiastical History*, Chapter 27, have written. Not unlike these were their genuine Offspring the *Helchefaites*, of whom *Eusebius* speaks in his sixth Book, Chapter 28 ; who by a perverse Zeal for the Law of *Moses*, repudiated the greatest Part of the NEW TESTAMENT, and especially all the Epistles of *Paul*. The same almost may be said of some *Valentinians* and other *Gnosticks*, as *Irenæus*, *Epiphanius*, and the Ancients describe them ; so that there is no need of adding any special Answer here.

The same befel these, in preposterously examining the Books of the NEW TESTAMENT, as afterwards happen'd to the *Manichees*, in the ill Opin-

nion they conceiv'd of the OLD. For as the *Manichees*, when they would not or could not rightly understand the Use of the OLD LAW, and the true Difference between the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT; and nevertheless were for having the Doctrine peculiar to the NEW to be wholly embrac'd, as the only means of Salvation; from that Ignorance they took Occasion to reject all the OLD TESTAMENT at once, as deriv'd from an evil *God*, and not from the Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. So likewise the foremention'd took a Handle to condemn most of the Writings of the NEW TESTAMENT, and especially those which contain the very *Soul*, if I may so say, of the Evangelick Doctrine, as do St. *Paul*'s Epistles above all the rest.

Conclusion. Those false and counterfeit Christians therefore excepted, who had nothing which in reality appertain'd to that Religion but the Title and Name they usurp'd, we find none of old, that were commonly reputed Christians, and embraced the Substance of Christianity,

anity, who ever doubted of most, or of the chief Books of the NEW TESTAMENT. And so much may suffice for this last Cause, for we have spoke of it before in the Second Chapter, where we have shew'd, that the common Consent of ancient Christians, in receiving the principal Scriptures of the NEW TESTAMENT, might be abundantly prov'd from *Justin*, *Irenæus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and especially *Eusebius*; and therefore we now proceed to somewhat else.





C H A P V.

*All Causes of doubting the Books
of the OLD TESTAMENT
remov'd, chiefly the Third con-
cerning Corruption.*

*The Old
Testa-
ment suf-
ficiently
confirm'd
by the
New.*



ITHERTO we seem to have evidently demonstrated, that allowing the Christian Religion to be true, there is no Reason to question the Authority of the Book call'd the NEW TESTAMENT: And from hence, as we said at the Beginning, it necessarily follows, that it is not reasonable any should suspect the Authority of the OLD, since that is manifestly confirm'd by the NEW. For in this Place, we acknowledge no Writings to belong to the former; but those that in the time of *Christ* and his Apostles, were held
to

to be sacred among the *Jews*, and openly taken, and confess'd to be worthy of Faith, approv'd and receiv'd as such by modern *Jews*, and have universally obtain'd indisputable Credit and Authority with all Christians. The Books by many call'd *Apocryphal*, that is, dubious, we strike out of the List.

Wherefore we have no need here to say any thing, either of the *two* ^{1st, 2d, and 4th} former, or of the *fourth* of those Causes of *Doubting*, whereby any one may be induc'd to with-hold Assent from any Book whatsoever, which in speaking of the NEW TESTAMENT we have examin'd: Since none of those *three* Causes of Doubt, for a Reason already assign'd, can affect the OLD TESTAMENT, if the NEW be confess'd to be of certain and unquestionable Authority. Of the *third* Cause only we shall say somewhat, which on some particular Accounts deserves to be considered here.

Answer

*Answer to some Objections against
MOSES and his Writings.*

BUT first it seems requisite to speak of MOSES himself, the Writer of the principal Books of the OLD TESTAMENT, wherein are contain'd the Fundamentals, not only of all the rest of the Books, but likewise, if I may so speak, of all divine Religion, as well *Jewish* as *Christian*. I have heard it said more than once, that some Persons of Learning object against those Books ascrib'd to MOSES, that Things are there mention'd, which happen'd long before he was born who is affirm'd to write them: So that he could not relate them of his own Knowledge, and, as he seems to do, assert them as unquestionably true; and therefore, say they, there is no good Reason to rely on his Word. This *Objection*, as we shall soon shew, though it has some Colour, has no Strength; nor by any Consequence, if thoroughly examin'd.

Objection.

Answer.

amin'd. It must be observ'd, *first*, therefore, that it is taken from the great Distance of Time that pass'd between the Writer, and what he writes to have been done. To this we say in general, that (excluding the singular Qualifications of MOSES) it may indeed be of Validity, to hinder the giving indubitable Faith to him; but is not of sufficient Weight to cause all he writes to be disbeliev'd. If so, how many celebrated *Historians* must be utterly rejected, who give an Account of Things of Antiquity, very remote from their own Times? Nevertheless, they are not only believ'd, but generally had in great Esteem; such as *Thucydides*, *Livy*, *Plutarch*, and many others. I mention this, to the end that although here the Question seems to be concerning full and absolute Faith only; yet, as will be shew'd more at large hereafter, it will be very much to our Purpose to know, whether the same Credit at least ought, or may be given to those *Histories* we now treat of,

*Second
Answer.*

*Dilemma
to evince
that Mo-
ses wrote
nothing
but Truth.*

of, as is commonly given to many o-
ther, of which we have no Certainty.
For such Faith may lead and be an In-
troduction to that which is more per-
fect and compleat ; as in all *Science* we
improve gradually. From *hence*, I say
then, if *Moses* liv'd in an Age very
distant from that, when many of the
Events he relates came to pass ; this
ought not in the least, to detract
from the Faith due to his Wri-
tings. For either we will allow him
to have been such a Man to whom
Credit might be given in Things he
says were done in his own Times, and
which he perfectly knew to be true,
and how they stood ; or we will not
allow him to have been such : If we
will not, 'tis then in vain to insist on
the great Interval between certain Facts
he writ, and the Age he afterwards li-
ved in ; as if we would insinuate, that
in Matters which were but a little
while before him, or happen'd in his
Days, he may or ought to be believ'd.
Now in this Objection it should be
plainly express'd, we are not to be-
lieve

lieve him in the least, either in that he says befell himself, or in those Incidents where he affirms he was present ; nor indeed in any thing else. But if we grant him to have been a Person to whom Faith is due, at least in Matters he could not by any means be deceiv'd ; and think him to be no way notoriously given to lying, we must be obliged to acknowledge and confess, that all he wrote is most certainly true, however distant from his Times ; and especially what seems to be less likely or probable to be known by him, namely, that this visible World was, and how it was, created of God ; and many other Passages of like nature, which he recorded.

For the same *Moses* asserts, and that constantly of himself (in which he could not speak falsely) that he was in so high a degree of Esteem with God, so belov'd by him, even to his Death, and, as he says, conversant and familiar with him, that this could not be so, without its being true no less, that he might not only know those Things, which

*A Reason
leading to
an Absur-
dity.*

which for a long space of Time were distant from his Age; especially those which properly appertain'd to God; but likewise that he knew, by Divine Revelation, that they were as he relates them. Otherwise a wicked Man, unworthy to live, was most belov'd by and intimate with God, a Man who had the Boldness to affirm such Things in Writing, not only of others, but even of God himself and his divine Operations; which he was wholly ignorant of, and thereby contriv'd most grossly to deceive and impose upon the World.

The Third Cause of Doubt concerning the Books of the OLD TESTAMENT confuted.

I Say then, that the Authority of the OLD TESTAMENT cannot be justly question'd, unless any one shall aver that from the Time of the Writing of the NEW, the OLD was in many Places corrupted and deprav'd; which
Cor-

Corruptions, since we cannot plainly discover, it is no more than reasonable to doubt every Article of that Book; but who can truly and certainly prove this? Moreover, to speak not only of Certainty, but Suspicion also. Either *that* Depravation must come to pass accidentally, or by design, by one or other of these it must be, as every one will readily confess. If by accident, what Book is there to which the same might not happen? Wherefore, if we are to suspect every thing we now read in the OLD TESTAMENT, as different from what was originally writ there, we ought to have the same Distrust of all the Books in the World; and consequently as to *History*, 'tis to no purpose to read any thing whatever. Now who does not know, that Depravations of Books, which are to be ascrib'd to Accident, besides their being of lesser moment, are for the most part such, as carry some Marks of those Depravations in them; and those suspicious Places, Men of any Judgment may perfectly discover from such Passages, where no

The Books of the Old Testament not corrupted by Accident.

Depra-

Depravation could accidentally happen. Of which we have said enough in the Objections concerning various *Readings*.

*Not done
by Jews.*

But if *that* Depravation was effected by Design, the *Jews* must of necessity be charged with it; forasmuch as they were no less than the perpetual Depositories, and Keepers of that Book. But it seems not likely, that they should attempt to alter or pervert any thing in it, except in particular Places that spake of the MESSIAH to come: Which Passages notwithstanding may be easily understood to refer to JESUS of NAZARETH, there foretold whom they crucified, and fulfill'd the Prophecies in so doing; or in Places which some way or other might condemn themselves, and expose their Obstinacy; which Depravation is not in the least to be heeded, since it is now laid down here for granted, that the NEW TESTAMENT cannot be receiv'd, but the OLD must be receiv'd with it; wherein is most clearly contain'd, what ever relates to the Knowledge of *Jesus of Nazareth* promis'd and foretold

told by the Prophets, together with all that is requisite to demonstrate his Excellence and Glory, and the Perverseness and Obstinacy of the *Jews*.

The Corruption of the OLD TESTAMENT, if any, cannot in the least prejudice the Christian Religion.

AND lastly, this is to be considered (let who will dispute it) if the NEW TESTAMENT be receiv'd, no Corruption of the OLD can be of any moment to prejudice our Religion in the whole; since nothing but what is of small account, could be in the OLD TESTAMENT, which is not to be found also in the NEW: Neither is any thing in *that* to be embraced now, which agrees not with what is written in *this*. So that the Reading of the OLD TESTAMENT is, for many Reasons useful to those who receive the NEW; I mean the Professors of the Christian Religion; but not altogether

ther, nor absolutely necessary in point of Salvation. This we would have understood; to give an Answer to them (if there be any such) who perhaps, to lessen the Authority of the OLD TESTAMENT, and shew, that in time past those Writings were depraved, will be ready to alledge, that many Things occur there, which no way agree with some Passages, to be found in the NEW; altho' those Passages in their Time were true and sacred; but afterwards did in some measure change their ancient Quality when the TESTAMENT was changed (as the very Names NEW and OLD import) that is, the very Covenant itself which God made with his People. From whence we must now at length conclude, that they who believe the *Christian Religion*, cannot reasonably distrust the Truth of the OLD TESTAMENT.



C H A P. VI.

The principal Question demonstrated, especially to JEWS, MAHOMETANS and PAGANS, and all who do not believe the Christian Religion; and yet believe some Religion true. Where the Excellency of Christianity is shewn by proper Arguments.



WE have, as we think, sufficiently shewn, that there is no Cause for any one's questioning the Authority of the Books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, if the Religion of *Jesus of Nazareth*, who is called *Christ*, be allowed to be true. We proceed now to enquire how the Authority of those Books may be prov'd to one, who

doubts whether *that* Religion be true, or even believes it to be utterly false. And altho' it be not usual to dispute on a Thing of this nature, on these Conditions; since it seems to be fruitless to endeavour to persuade any Man, that Faith is to be annex'd to Books concerning Religion, of the Truth of which there is no Certainty; yet we will briefly offer somewhat that we think may be said here to good effect.

Distinction of those who are not Christians.

To which end it is necessary, first of all, to make a clear Distinction between those we have to do with: For either they, who doubt the Truth of the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, or take it to be utterly false, believe there is, or may be, some true Religion; as do *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Pagan Idolaters* at this day, or they do not believe so; but rather, on the contrary, take all Religions, which are or may be, to be false; and therefore plainly deny the Being of a God, or at least will not acknowledge that Men are guided and govern'd by his particular Care,
and

and good Providence ; and hereby dis-
own he is to be worship'd by any Re-
ligion, as *Atheists, Epicureans, Li-*
bertines, and such like.

A Way of dealing with all these.

A General Method of convincing
these, that Faith is absolutely
to be given to the foremention'd
Books, may be, to demonstrate the
Truth of the *Christian Religion*. For
it has been already shew'd, that if this
be prov'd, there remains no Reason
why the former ought not to be done.
Now though this be a Thing of such
Nature that requires a long Disputa-
tion, and a larger Volume ; yet as far
as our Intention of being as succinct as
possible shall permit, we will endea-
vour to say somewhat to this Argu-
ment which may not be impertinent,
and with respect to all these Kinds of
Men who are Strangers to *Christ*, as
we have now distinguish'd them.

A proper Manner of arguing with those who admit, if not the Christian, yet some other Religion; that is, who believe a God and his Providence.

AS to him therefore who believes there is, or may be, some true Religion, I cannot indeed see, if he be a Man of sound Judgment, how he can avoid discovering clearly, that the *Christian Religion* not only excells all other, but has in it likewise whatever can be desir'd in any true Religion; infomuch, that either *this* alone must be true, or no Religion is or can be, but what is false: Of which, by Divine Permission, more shall be occasionally said hereafter. But some-body will ask, How would you have me capable of making any Judgment of the *Christian Religion*, who know not what *that* Religion is, by reason of so many, so various, and even contrary

Opi-

*Answer to
Objection
from
the Dissen-
sions of
Christians.*

Opinions, which were of old, and are now, concerning a multitude of Things thereunto belonging, and *that* too, among Men of the greatest Learning, and no less Fame and Reputation for Sanctity? This is a common Objection of *Jews, Turks*, and other Infidels.

*The Truth of the Christian Religion
prov'd by conclusive Arguments.*

TO those so many various, and even contrary Opinions, I answer; That they cannot prejudice nor invalidate the Truth of the main Part of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, which, without doubt, is *that* wherein all who profess it, seem to agree; namely, the Holy Precepts it prescribes, and those most admirable Promises, worthy of God, contain'd therein. In which two Articles, as its essential Parts, all Religion chiefly consists, as is well known.

1. From
holy Pre-
cepts.

What other *Religion* ever was, or can be, in which so great, not to say greater Innocence and Integrity of Life, or truer Probity was requir'd? What *Religion* so perfectly free from all Superstition, or the least ridiculous Pageantry, as *that* Worship, which all who truly profess themselves Christians, acknowledge to be recommended to them in their *Religion*? Or rather, what other *Religion*, whose Precepts and Rules of Life, if compar'd with ours, are not like a faint glimmering Light, oppos'd to the Noon-day Sun? A very few Instances would make this evident.

2. From
the Promi-
ses all Di-
vine.

Touching the Promises: Who sees not, that nothing more sublime, nothing more divine can be even imagined, than those the Author of *Christianity* proposes to them who will seriously embrace and practise his Precepts for the most excellent transcendent Rewards both of the present and of a future Life; particularly divine Adoption, Inheritance of Heaven, everlasting and unspeakable Felicity with God,
the

the same which the Author JESUS CHRIST himself has obtain'd, he most openly promis'd to them who would worship and obey him.

Add to this, that his *Manner* of giving those Precepts, and making those Promises, as all who call themselves Christians agree, was so singular and perfect, that it raises the highest Admiration in all, who with some Diligence and Seriousness consider it ; for he, who gave those Precepts, first of all Men, manifestly and absolutely fullfill'd what he press'd and enjoin'd others to do : So that he taught his Disciples what they were to practise, no less by his own Example in the highest Instances, than by his most powerful Words and Exhortations. And after he had walk'd visibly to the Eyes of all Men in the same way of Virtue and Sanctity he had explain'd to others, obtain'd the Happiness to which he affirmed it would conduct them, possessed the Promises he had so often made, and was likewise invested with Power

3. From
his most
wonderful
manner of
confirming
all.

to

to confer them on his Followers as he had engag'd to do.

*The Excellence of
our Religion be-
yond the
Jewish.*

What other *Religion* then can equal ours in these Respects, especially in this last Part? For what other is there wherein the Author and Founder promis'd that he himself would give the Reward he propos'd to all them who would observe his Precepts, or obtained the same himself; much less the Power of extending it to others? *Moses* promis'd that many Felicities would befall all the Keepers of the divine Law deliver'd by him; but of which, as far as appears, he himself shared the least Part; for during the whole Term of his Days, he was surrounded with Troubles; and at the very Close of his Life, not allow'd to put his Foot on that Land which God gave for a perpetual Inheritance to the People he conducted thither, much less was he permitted to introduce them into it to see the entire Success, and reap the Fruit of his so many and great Labours: So that *Moses* is not to be compar'd with Christ.

Mahomet

Mahomet likewise promis'd to them who would observe the Religion forg-
ed by him, Joys and great Pleasures af-
ter this Life, of which there is nothing
but a false Sign, as yet, of his obtain-
ing the least Part. For 'tis known, or
at least thought to be known at this
Day where his Body lies destitute of
Life and Sense, and so has been for
near a thousand Years or more. We
have little Reason to think better of
other Religions.

Furthermore, if any one shall say, allowing all to be true which I have
affirm'd of the Author of the *Christi-
an Religion*, there will be an End of
disputing with Unbelievers : Since from
thence it must of necessity be conclu-
ded, that this Religion is most infalli-
bly true; but some doubt these Things,
or firmly believe them to be Fables and
Fictions : I answer, as to what we
are upon here, we need not enquire
whether that which has been said be
true ; it is enough that it has been
constantly asserted in the *Christian Re-
ligion* : So that let this *Religion* in it-
self

*And be-
yond the
Mahome-
tan, &c.*

*Answer to
an Objec-
tion.*

self be compared with all other, and allowing whatever is affirm'd in them, it will be evident, that this far transcends them all ; although whatever is averr'd in the *Christian Religion* to have happen'd to its first Author, wants not proper Proofs, nor such Credentials as he who shall presume to contradict, or to represent as Fables and Lies, must betray a great deal of Weakness, and be guilty of extreme Temerity, as will be fully and particularly made out hereafter.

The Cause that hinders the perceiving of this Excellence in passing detected.

SINCE therefore, if *that* only in the *Christian Religion* be considered, wherein all who profess the same do, and always have agreed, constrain'd by the Force of Truth, it may be very easily understood how preferable it is to all other Religions : What do you think would follow then, if
the

the Truth of all the principal Things appertaining to it were fully known? Which are nevertheless known to some few, who beyond measure admire the divine and wonderful OEconomy and Wisdom that shines in the whole and every part thereof, and clearly see whatever is wont to be, or may be urg'd against it, has no Ground, or such as may most easily be confuted; since most of that is objected; because by an inveterate Error, some Things are falsely suppos'd and affirm'd, as most authentick and necessary Doctrines in this Religion, which from the Beginning knew nothing like such Comments: And because it is even yet in some measure unknown, how some of the most essential Points relating to it are to be understood. Those Errors I reserve to explain, when I shall, with the Divine Assistance, some time hereafter write of the Truth of this most holy and most wise Religion, where all the weightier Things that can be urg'd against it shall be answer'd, which either in whole or in part

*Another
Work prom-
ised con-
cerning
this Argu-
ment.*

part has been already attempted by other Hands ; but because all the secret or mystical Matters in it, were not rightly known to them, and they for that reason made many Concessions to the common Adversaries, which are falsely asserted in it for Truths : Hence it came, that they could not in the least satisfy those who were of acute Discernment and sublime Parts.

By reading only of the NEW TESTAMENT, its Excellency may be sufficiently understood.

IT may therefore be easily perceiv'd by any one of competent Judgment, even from that alone which has been always affirm'd of *Christianity*, by those who profess'd it, how much it is to be preferr'd before all other Institutions of Religion, and that if there is, or can be, any true Religion on Earth, it must be this. Besides, since those for the generality, who ever profess'd themselves Christians, altho'

tho' they held different and repugnant Opinions from each other, acknowledged the Sum of their Religion to be contain'd in the Book, call'd the NEW TESTAMENT ; every one who doubts the Truth of it, may, and ought diligently and attentively to read that Book. And then truly, if he be not void of common Sense, and has not through Prejudice resolv'd what the Decrees and Ordinances of that Religion shall be, either in whole or in part, may without any other Aid acquire a most clear Knowledge, if not of all, yet of most that relates to it ; which will effectually serve to make him feel, if I may use that Expression, with his own Hands, its Excellency and divine Truth above all other.

If any shall object, that none can read the NEW TESTAMENT with an Intent clearly to know the Nature of the Religion of Christians, delivered by *Jesus of Nazareth* ; since the Authority of that NEW TESTAMENT itself is question'd ; I answer (and this may be added to what has been said

Answer to an Objection concerning the sufficient Knowledge of our Religion.

in

in former Chapters) of necessity all such Arguing concerning the Authority of that Book, which can deserve a Place here, must either refer to the *History* of those Things which came to pass in that very Time (and in that very Part only, which is in no wise commonly receiv'd as true by all, especially the greatest Enemies of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, and which, if receiv'd, might plainly demonstrate his *Institution* to be good, and worthy to be embrac'd) or such Arguing must relate to the *Promises* and other *Predictions* of Things future, or to the *Discovery* of Things present or past; but on no account to the *Doctrine* of the whole, as consider'd only *Historically*. For, who would not deserve to be laugh'd at, who hearing Men of any Profession affirm, that their Religion is contain'd in a certain Book, and that all, who ever receiv'd it, always thought so, shall say he believes nothing less? What Person is there, for instance, that has the Assurance to deny, or say, he doubts whether the Religion

ligion of the *Jews*, deliver'd by *Moses*, be contain'd in the OLD TESTAMENT; or that of the *Turks*, and other *Mahometans*, in the *Alcoran* or *Coran* of *Mahomet*? The same must be concluded of Books of other Religions.

Wherefore it seems to be very strange and absurd, that any should be found, who knowing that the Book of the NEW TESTAMENT was always esteem'd by Christians, to comprehend the Sum of their Religion, shall notwithstanding presume to say he believes no such Thing, or doubts it at least; neither will own, that a diligent and attentive Perusal of that Book, is enough to enable any to acquire certain Knowledge of the Sum of what it contains; and that the *Doctrine* of *Jesus Christ* and his true Ministers is compris'd therein. Which alone is enough to justify the Conclusion we have now made. This we were willing to speak distinctly, in regard to them, who among * Christians confess indeed there

* *Romanists.*

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is

is nothing written in the NEW TESTAMENT of the *Institution* of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, which appertains not to it ; but insist, that many Things were not recorded there, that belong to it as much as those which are written. Of this more fully hereafter.

The Truth of the Christian Religion further prov'd, from proper Circumstances.

BUT now, what have we to say of so many peculiar and proper Circumstances of this Religion, that have been always deservedly esteem'd, as Matters of great moment, which many also have produced to prove its Truth ? As appears by many Writings of the Ancients.

1. *From the Condition of those who deliver'd it.*

First, for that an innumerable Company of both Sexes, young and old, of all Orders and Conditions of Life, most constantly testify'd its Truth, and were ready to sign it with their Blood, from the first Beginning of it, by its Author.

thor. Of whom the greater part had been before bred and educated in some other Religion, which for many Ages had been continued and preserved by their Forefathers and great Ancestors; and that either altogether different from *Christianity*, as were the *Pagan* Religions, or peculiar to such who were always the greatest Enemies to the Christian Name, I mean, *Jews*. And this may pass for one Circumstance.

Afterward, in a very short space of time, it made its Progress into Places very remote from that, where it was first promulged. And altho', for little less than three hundred Years, from its Rise, it was not only hated every where, but likewise most barbarously insulted and inhumanly punish'd in the Persons who embraced it (having not yet obtain'd any Prince or Potentate, who openly and publickly profess'd it) notwithstanding all this, it encreas'd daily more and more, and spread far and near over all Parts of the Earth; to a degree, that must be

2. From the miraculous Propagation thereof, notwithstanding the greatest opposition.

most wonderful to all who diligently consider it.

3. *From
its bidden
Efficacy in
Believers.*

Those who first publish'd it, after its *Author*, were Men of the least or rather of no Authority and Esteem among their Contemporaries, destitute of all human Power and Assistance: Such were they no less, who after them publicly preach'd it. Neither was there ever any one, till some Ages after, by Threats, Fear, or on the contrary by Promises drawn to profess it, by those who adher'd to and follow'd it, or by any Hope, but only what it carries in itself.

4. *From
its subver-
ting other
Religions.*

Moreover on the Appearance of this, *other Religions* by degrees vanish'd and dwindled to nothing, like Darknes at the Rising of the Sun: So that in most of those Places, where it was freely and publicly taught, in Process of Time there scarcely remain'd any Footsteps of the rest, the *Jewish* excepted, which this did in some sort allow, and necessarily acknowledge to have been most authentick and true for a long Tract of Years, and most acceptable to
God,

God, by whom it was reveal'd of old to that People; but so as to give place to the Christian Institution in the Fullness of Time.

These and some other like collateral Circumstances of Christianity, wholly wanting to other Religions, ought to be of competent Validity to evince the Truth of it, even to those who believe no Religion. But certainly if there be any, who cannot from thence plainly discern, how much Christianity is to be preferr'd before all other Religions, he may be said to be defective in Understanding, or blinded by some Spirit of Obstinacy, inveterate, ill Habits, or bad Education from his Infancy. As must be affirm'd of the *Jews* of our Times.

To these Circumstances I shall add something greater than a Circumstance, or rather a rational Inference from thence; it is this: Since Religion is not a natural Thing (otherwise there would be no whole Nations quite destitute of all Religion, as some in our Age have been discover'd to be; for

An Objection of Unbelievers foreclosed

God's singular Care of his Religion.

instance, in the Region of *Brasil*, as Writers of very good Credit testify, and as I have been particularly informed and assur'd, by the constant Affirmation of a Franciscan Monk of *Pistoria* *, one of those Preachers who are commonly called *Capuchins*, a Man of honest Parentage, Wisdom, and Prudence, who had been in that Country) I say then, since Religion is not a natural Thing, but must be, if true, of divine Revelation, 'tis not only unlikely, but altogether impossible, that the true Religion, which God would have to be perpetual, and common to all Nations, should not by his most certain and singular Command and Assistance, be preach'd every where to Men of all States and Conditions. Now this cannot truly, nor with any Semblance of Truth, be said of any other; but the *Christian* Religion, which alone was preach'd to all Men at the same Time in various Parts of the Earth, without any Distinction or

* A City of Tuscany.

Respect of Persons, and that by many who affirm'd they were sent, and most certainly and peculiarly appointed of God for that very End.

Wherefore it must be concluded, if any *Religion* in the World is never to cease, and to extend to Men of all States and Conditions of Life, it is the *Christian*: And for the same Reason, if there be any true Religion, this is the truest of all; for such without doubt it behov'd that finally to be, which God himself should give to Mankind, to be observ'd throughout all Ages. Hence it seems an easy Matter to convince any Man not byas'd by Interest, Party, or some such like Prejudice, but dispos'd to hear Reason, that if any Religion be true, it must be that of *Jesus of Nazareth*, who is call'd Christ: And consequently all which has been argu'd above, may be most clearly prov'd: For if any one shall deny those Things to be true, which relating to *History* we have laid down for granted in this Disputation, he would be unworthy of an Answer;

inasmuch, as those who have ever been, and now are the greatest Enemies of *Jesus of Nazareth*, and his Religion, never had the *Forehead* to deny them, as being too manifest, and of which there always did, and do at this Day, for the most part, appear the clearest Indications, such as present themselves even to the *external* Senses: But somewhat more of this hereafter.





C H A P VII.

Two Ways of treating with Epicureans and Atheists, to prevail with them to acknowledge a God and a Providence, and of consequence to admit of some Religion. Where the Truth of the Christian Religion is further asserted.



ITHERTO we have disputed with those who allow of some kind of Religion: But what Arguments shall we use to demonstrate the Truth of *Christianity* to them, who absolutely disown all Religion? Certainly, if we are for keeping to the Method we propos'd, it should seem the readiest Way to effect this, to constrain them to confess what we have said they deny,
and

and by found Reasons induce them to acknowledge not only the Being of a *God*, or first *Mover* and Cause of all Things, endu'd, if I may so say, with formal Essence, and particularly, of this visible World; but that there is a Divine Providence likewise, whereby *God* in a peculiar manner takes Care of, and inspects Men and their Actions, and by these Means bring Unbelievers to grant some true Religion: For this being confess'd, we have already shew'd it must necessarily follow, that the Religion of *Jesus of Nazareth* is true, whether we look on the Substance or Circumstances of it, of which we have given Instances enough above.

*An easier
Way by
certain
Supposi-
tions.*

Altho' we doubt not in the least, that this Method, if rightly urg'd, might, without any great Pains prove effectual to convince them; especially, if Arguments are taken not so much from Nature, and its necessary Productions, as from free and voluntary Events, which have been, and daily are seen to come to pass, out of the common Course of Nature; yet
since

since this would require a long Discussion, we hasten to the Point in Dispute, briefly to inform those Unbelievers how much they are mistaken: For, by a few and plain Suppositions, without any more Trouble, it may be made appear, that the Religion of *Jesus* of *Nazareth* is most undoubtedly true.

And first, we would ask those Men, whether they'll own there ever was such a Person as *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, who publickly propos'd his Religion, and made it his Business to persuade Men to receive it, or did any way speak of, or give Precepts or Promises concerning Religion. If they deny this, they may be convinc'd by manifest Signs and Effects: As for example, there were hitherto, and are now, innumerable Multitudes who did, and do profess the Religion of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, and who, from its very Beginning, laid down their Lives for his Sake; as all History assures us, and as those, who have been the most capital Enemies of this Religion, confess, namely

1. Supposition concerning Jesus and his Doctrine.

ly the *Jews*. So that the first Supposition cannot in the least be deny'd.

2. *Supposition concerning his Death procured by the Jews.*

If those Persons will grant me there was one *Jesus* of *Nazareth* who professed to give Precepts of a certain Religion, as indeed they are compell'd to allow ; then I ask them, Whether they believe the same *Jesus*, by the Procurement of the chief Men of the *Jewish* Nation, was put to a shameful Death, as a seditious Person, who blasphem'd God, and impos'd on the People? How they can disown this likewise, I cannot see, while *that* very Nation is still in being, who deny not that they procur'd, and acted what I have now said, altho' it subjects them to Hatred and Contempt where-ever they are ; and to other infinite Miseries and Calamities no less : Not to mention that the perpetual and universal Consent of the World, in the constant Opinion of the whole Truth of what we have affirm'd of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, is sufficient to prove it, without other Conjectures or Schemes.

If it had not been so, how came it to pass that so great a Number, among whom were many very wise and learned, should voluntarily abjure their ancient Religions, and renounce their Opinions imbib'd in their infancy, and which they were grown old in, of whose Truth they had been thoroughly persuaded, and by so doing, expose themselves to manifold Indignities, a thousand Vexations, and evident Dangers; nay, what's more, to an unavoidable, cruel, and scandalous Death, and all this to embrace a Religion, of which the Author was, by his own Nation, reputed a most wicked and villainous Impostor? To captivate the Minds of Men so far, of Necessity, highly probable, and powerful Arguments were requisite, and such as openly and undeniably shew'd that he spake Truth. Which Arguments, when well examined, will, without question, be found to be irrefragable, and deriv'd from firm, unshaken, and no way fallacious Principles. For that from the Beginning of *Christianity*, and then, more than

3. *Supposition that no body believes without Reason, and especially among Christians.*

than ever since, they were so prevalent and effectual to work upon the Spirits and Hearts of Men who would have abhorr'd this Religion, unless clear and evident Truth had oblig'd them to act and suffer as they did, I mean those who first conform'd to, and recommended it to others ; which will more plainly appear in the Sequel.

4. *Supposition concerning the truly divine Miracles of Christ.*

The Murderers themselves of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, deny not at this Day, nor ever did deny, that he wrought very great Miracles, in Confirmation of what he constantly taught, and such, as they confess, could not be effected by the Operation of ordinary and natural Causes: But say, that *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, besides his being a Magician, was also a great *Cabalist* ; and had, they know not what Kind of Interpretation of the Name of God, whereby he did all those mighty Works. But such a *Cabala* of theirs is not to be believ'd, without believing withal, that there is some true Religion: Nor according to their own Law and Discipline was it ever known, that any
Pro-

Prophet or Preacher of Things sacred could do such Wonders, as they acknowledge our *Jesus* did, without being a divine Person, and endu'd with divine Power. Indeed God has given the same Power to some for a different End, to draw Men from the Worship of the true, and induce them to follow strange *Gods*, thereby to try and discover his sincere Servants, as well as to testify and confirm his heavenly Truth; of which Examples are not wanting.

Now *Jesus* of *Nazareth* did not only make no Attempt at any time to prevail with Men to forsake the Adoration of that God who was acknowledged to be the true God, by those, who, as has been said, were his very Murderers, or to lead them to strange *Gods*; but on the contrary, ascrib'd all Honour and Glory to that God only, declaring him to be the sole Author of all the wonderful Works he did, of his Doctrine, his Power, and universal Happiness, not depriving him of the least Part of what was attributed to him

5. *Supposition. The Design of the Doctrine of Christ was most holy.*

him by the *Jews* themselves; but on the contrary, made Use of all Occasions to move them to restore what they had taken from him: Wherefore, according to their own Law and Discipline, they must confess this, at least, that *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, without all Controversy, was a holy and truly divine Person. Nor does it amount to any thing against us, for them to contradict all I have affirm'd of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, with respect to the Worship of their God, provided this only remains undeniable, that he did not endeavour to turn any from the Adoration of the true Deity.

*Answer to
another
Objection
from
Christ's
abrogating the
divine
Law.*

But possibly, they'll say, that *Jesus* did enough to alienate Men from their Duty to the Divinity, whom they, *i. e.* the *Jews* worship'd, by attempting to persuade them, that he would no longer have the Law to be perfectly observ'd, which he himself had given to his People in the Beginning by *Moses*. I answer, that our *Jesus*, while he was a Prophet, and acted as such in this World, never sought so to do; but
without

without infringing any of the Precepts God gave to his People, taught them only to what greater Perfection, agreeable to greater Promises which he propos'd in his Name, the better Part of them extended: Deferring the Abrogation of some of them to be made by himself when he should be no more a mortal Doctor, nor Prophet; but a heavenly Prince, Lord, and eternal King, given to that People by the same God, of whose royal Dominion and Authority, very evident Signs were to appear by his *Resurrection* from the Dead, his *Ascension* into Heaven, and sending down, more than once, the Holy Spirit on his Disciples, as the Holy History testifies.

But to return to those with whom we now dispute, and then conclude. If the Murderers of *Jesus Christ*, and their Posterity, who never fail'd to be his avow'd Enemies, freely confess'd, and do at this Day confess, that he wrought Miracles to confirm his Doctrine, of necessity the Thing must be so; since it is impossi-

K ble

*The Truth
of our Re-
ligion
from the
Miracles
of Christ,*

ble any other Motive whatever, but manifest and undeniable Truth should make them own what was so much against their Inclinations; Truth, I say, wherein they could not be deceiv'd, being present, and acquainted with all he did from the Beginning: It follows, that they who deny all Religion, are oblig'd to shew some other Causes of those wonderful Works: And such moreover, from whence it may not in the least be concluded, that the Religion which he preach'd who wrought those Miracles is true, or that there is any true Religion in the World. I cannot indeed see when they will be able to effect this; for it is certain, whoever holds the Opinion peculiar to *Epicureans*, that Religion is a human Invention, and therefore derides it, thinking it in vain to hope or fear God will either reward or punish good or bad Actions: 'Tis certain, that he who is of this Persuasion, will likewise laugh when he hears talk of any Miracles wrought by any Men whatever; being
accustom'd

accustom'd to impute all Events to Natural Causes.

But to proceed, we ask them, Whether they believe also, that the Apostles, or those Disciples, who first, after the ignominious Death of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, in the Face as it were of the World, durst own, practise, and publicly recommend his Discipline, and constantly affirm, the same *Jesus* rose from the Dead, were really persuaded of all this? Doubtless they will answer, compell'd by Truth, they allow it; forasmuch as that very Discipline implies and includes his Resurrection, and what's more, makes Use of it for its principal Support and Foundation, without which, it is manifest, the whole Superstructure must certainly fall. For on this Example of the Resurrection of *Christ*, the Faith and Hope of all Christians chiefly depend; as the Scriptures of the NEW TESTAMENT clearly shew. This being so, I desire them to tell me, Whether they'll grant, that those Apostles affirm'd they themselves saw him, con-

6. Suppo-
sition The
glorious
Resurrec-
tion of Je-
sus Christ.

vers'd, eat, and drank with him, after his Resurrection? For if they shall reply, they do not give the least Credit to this, besides their openly opposing the History of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, in that Part, which was never call'd in Question, they speak against all manner of Probability: It being scarce any way possible, that those who first undertook to publish and persuade the Belief of a Thing so very repugnant to human Judgment, should pretend they had it by Hearsay only; but did not behold it themselves, and were thereby most assuredly convinc'd of its Truth; as will further appear hereafter, where this Argument will occasionally be urg'd again.

*Of which
many were
Eye-Wit-
nesses.*

Therefore, as must be confess'd, if those first Disciples declar'd that they themselves actually saw *Jesus* risen from the Dead, and apparently knew it to be so, and for that very Reason, as is not to be doubted, suffer'd the most vile Reproaches, and most of them to confirm the same, refus'd not to part with their Lives: It necessarily follows,

follows, that *Jesus Christ* rose again, as they declar'd, or they wilfully subjected themselves to be most grievously persecuted, and miserably treated and put to Death, for obstinately asserting what they knew to be utterly false. The latter, as being absolutely contradictory to common Sense, can in no wise be true; therefore the former must unavoidably be true, especially since no Probability can be assign'd to the contrary, as all who are not void of Understanding, by natural Light, may comprehend and perceive.

For, if any one shall object, that both Reason and Nature are repugnant to what has been said: I answer to the first of these; That 'tis one Point for Reason to be indeed contrary to this or that Thing; but another, not to comprehend and understand it. No Man can perhaps any way satisfy himself, how a dead Man can be restor'd to Life; but neither Reason nor Nature tell us, that therefore 'tis a Thing impossible. Not to say, that there were not wanting Philosophers

*Resurrecti-
on from
the Dead
not in it
self impos-
sible.*

of old, who attempted to shew, by natural Causes and Effects, that 'tis possible for a dead Man to revive. Which certainly demonstrates this at least, if no more; that reviving, if I may express my self so, after Death, is not wholly contrary to Reason and Nature, or implies a Contradiction.

7. *Supposition, that the Apostles testified the Resurrection of Christ from certain Knowledge.*

Caution I.

But some will make an Exception here, and alledge, that those first Christians were indeed persecuted and put to Death, for affirming *Jesus of Nazareth* rose again; for so they had perswaded themselves; but not for declaring *they saw him alive again after his Death*, altho' they affirm'd that too. I answer first, when 'tis allow'd they testify'd, they saw *Jesus* risen, and of necessity, as we have shewn in this Attestation, laid the Foundation of the other Assertion, namely, That *Jesus* was certainly rais'd from the Dead; one of these Affirmations cannot by any means be separated from the other, and it must be own'd, they were persecuted and kill'd, not only for maintaining *Jesus* rose again; but also

also because they said, they *saw him alive after his Resurrection.*

And indeed those *Jews*, who were first inform'd that *Jesus* was risen from the Dead, which they deny'd, inveighing against them, who publickly preach'd it, would have been little concern'd, that they should so constantly and strenuously attest, unless they had affirm'd it as a Thing most evidently known to themselves, and of which they were Eye-witnesses; but would have despis'd and treated them as they had deserv'd, that is, as Persons beside themselves, for so indeed they must have been.

Caution
II.

Moreover, how could the first Divulgers so strongly imagine, that *Jesus* rose again, and chuse rather to die, than cease to persist in it; if they had not been thoroughly convinc'd of the Truth of the Fact, by their own Senses and their own certain Knowledge? What other Proofs, what Arguments could be sufficient to assure them of this Event, so far as to prevail with them, tho' they foresaw the Consequence,

Caution
III.

quence, to despise their very Lives, rather than cease to publish and constantly affirm it? Nay, what other Cause could their perpetual Successors have to hazard their All, by privately or openly deposing that *Jesus* of *Nazareth* rose from the Dead, and believing it to be undeniably true; but because those who first testified and seal'd it with their Blood, saw and knew it to be so? Which Faith the Spirit of God was wont to strengthen more and more in both, under the very Cross. Lastly, it must be observ'd, that 'tis far from all manner of likelihood, those first Disciples, who cannot be denied to have been so pious as not to refuse to die for their Religion, should forge such a notorious Falshood, and of so great moment, as that must be when they solemnly declar'd, they had seen *Jesus* risen again, if it had not been most manifestly true. For, if it shall be said, without this Fiction they would not have been hearken'd to; I desire to know what could compel, or any way induce them to attempt to per-
fwade

Caution
IV.

swade others to the Belief of that, which they were not in the least perswaded of themselves, especially when their Lives were apparently at stake? If it was by any other Motive or Reason, but their own seeing it, why did they not offer or propose the like Way of knowing it to others, believing it to be true, and omit the Motive they knew to be false? For if they were convinc'd by any other Means, but because they actually saw it, it should seem that others might be wrought upon by the same.

From what has been hitherto disputed, it may easily be understood, *Jesus of Nazareth* most certainly return'd from Death to Life, and not only that there is one true God, and who has a singular Regard to Men; but also that the Religion of *Jesus* is unquestionably true, since *Christ* could not rise again; but by the special Providence of God, nor would he have concurr'd therein, but for the Confirmation of all Things the Lord *Jesus* spake in his Name. For certainly he would never have

The Truth of our Religion most firmly proved by the Resurrection of Christ.

have interpos'd in either, if *Jesus* had been an Impostor and a Deceiver, as doubtless he must be, if the Doctrine he deliver'd had been false; especially since he profess'd he receiv'd it from God, and was sent by him, to preach and confirm it to the World.

Other Reasons for the Truth of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

IT would be too long, even to hint other solid Reasons we have in our Hands, to demonstrate to those who deny all Religion, that the Religion of *Jesus of Nazareth* is true, and which for the most part have, before this time, been alledg'd and explain'd by others. I shall only say this, whoever carefully considers the Rise and Progress of this Religion, and looks with Diligence on the Events attending it, which can by no means be disowned; and reflects besides on the Things which, many Ages before the Birth of *Jesus*, were written and foretold concerning

cerning him by the *Prophets* of the *Old Testament*, first by *Isaiah* and after by *Daniel*, unless he be altogether ignorant, or a sworn Enemy of *Jesus* from his very Cradle, as are the latter or modern Jews ; or is so far blinded by his own corrupt Passions, Malignity and Vices, as to be inclin'd to hate all Religion, he will clearly see, it can hardly be possible, that this Religion should not be undoubtedly most true, and in every respect to be embraced without Scruple or Reserve.

And this we suppose is enough to be said here, in passing, to prove the Truth of *Christianity* : First, to such that acknowledge some Religion ; and next to those also, who deny all Religion ; whereby it may be demonstrated to both, that undoubted Faith is due to the Books of the *Old* and *New Testament*, as has been shewn before.

General Conclusion ; as to those who own some Religion, and those who deny all Religion.



C H A P. VIII.

Briefly prov'd to all, that no just Cause can be assign'd, why Credit should not be given to the Books of the Old and New Testament Where some Objections are removed.

Answer to first Objection from seeming Contradictions.



Would take the Freedom to ask any one, from whence it comes, that he places no Faith in the History of the *New Testament*. For if he shall answer, it is because he finds some Things related by one of those Writers, otherwise than by another. To this, besides what has been reply'd before, I shall say further, if such Reasoning be good, it will follow no History writ by several Hands, is to be believ'd.

For

For it always happens, that divers Writers of any one History vary, and sometimes, if I may so say, even contradict each other, especially in Things of little or no moment.

If he shall answer, some Things are found in the *New Testament*, which in his Judgment are altogether impossible: I say to this; That altho' we know, by frequent Experience, many Things come to pass, which, by those who saw them not, are wont to be esteem'd in themselves incredible, yet, if many testify they were Eye-witnesses of what they describe, and that they had sure and certain Knowledge of it; and we are satisfy'd they could not be deceiv'd, nor any way likely to combine to impose on others: Hence I say, we may be prevail'd with easily to believe Things or Facts, however difficult or surprizing in their own Nature, or otherwise in Appearance impossible: And what's more, we see many Transactions commonly believ'd, how absurd and unusual soever, provided they are confirm'd by the open
and

*Answer to
second Ob-
jection
from Im-
possibili-
ties.*

and known Testimonies of some Historians, in other respects worthy of Credit; altho' not one of them affirms, he was present, when they were done. Neither can any thing perhaps be found so strange and seemingly incredible, tho' recorded by one Writer only, of whose Veracity there is no Reason to doubt, in what he affirms he saw himself, or had been known to speak of, as a Fact at which he was present, and wherein he could not be deceiv'd; who would not commonly be believ'd: And he ought to be look'd on as very weak or conceited, who should refuse to give credit to him, unless what he attests should be opposite to all Probability.

Shewn that the Apostles writ nothing; but what was most certainly true.

WE have observ'd above, that the History of the *New Testament*, was writ by several Persons, who (as they them-

themselves partly affirm) speak openly in it, as of Things at which they were either actually present, or of Things as certain as if they had been present. Now these Men for the most part relate Facts, at which, if they were present, 'twas impossible they should give a false Account; neither does any probable Reason appear, why they should not be thought sincere; or should industriously publish such great Falsities; and what was so very unlikely of itself to gain any Credit with others. Besides, there is no Cause to be assign'd, for their not being silent: When to publish what they did, whether true or false, was so much to their own inevitable Peril and Loss, being every where expos'd and persecuted for so doing; but the greatest Prevalence of Truth, together with the Concurrency of a greater Power (which has no Hand but in Things true) that is, had not the divine Assistance, exceeding the Limits of created Nature, mov'd and compell'd them to it.

*The Want
of Probity
the Cause
of Unbe-
lief.*

Where-

*Answer to
third Ob-
jection con-
cerning
the Cause
of Unbe-
lief.*

Wherefore, if I may freely speak my Thoughts, and what may be easily prov'd, it's most likely, that they who neither by Birth nor Education are Enemies to *Jesus*, nor Strangers to him and his Religion; and yet give but little or no Credit to the *New Testament*, are not, if in their Senses, inclin'd to act so by any probable Reason, but only by Vice or Immorality, that is, the Difficulty of walking in the Way, and Practice of real Virtue, not to say, by Corruption of Mind, wrought upon to reject the History of the NEW TESTAMENT. Forasmuch as he who shall entirely believe the Truth of that History, will believe the Christian Religion to be true likewise; and accordingly in view of that most desirable and incomparable Reward of Immortality and eternal Happiness propos'd thereby, study to be such as it requires, honest and pious, of Conduct and Morals truly divine. For it evidently appears, these Things are inseparably connected together, and infer each other. He therefore, who
in

in his Disposition and Will, is a Stranger to or alienated from this Probity, this Sanctity and these divine Morals, cannot be induc'd to believe that to be absolutely true, whereby he sees he is obliged to adorn himself with those Virtues ; but by his perverse Affections and bad Disposition, to which the Gospel's diametrically opposite, is so blinded, he cannot or will not perceive nor acknowledge those plain and forcible Reasons, which might otherwise perswade him that *History* is undeniable : Yet, if on some Occasions, any Light of this Truth appears to him, he endeavours all he can not to discern or to extinguish it, and perswade himself 'tis of no moment ; nor in the least to be heeded, and by all Ways and Means shuns and declines that Light, which more and more detects his Depravity and wilful Wickedness. Concerning which, see *John* iii. ver. 19, &c.

The Precepts of Christ deter many from believing in him.

FOR, 'tis most infallibly true, if to the *Evangelical History*, there had not been annex'd those strict Precepts of exemplary Contenance, perfect Humility, highest Liberality, Contempt of this World, Self-denial, Patience and bearing all Evils, &c. there would be no body, if not otherwise wholly bias'd to the contrary, by Disorder or Corruption of Mind, who would reject it, and for the sake of the blessed Immortality, most clearly spoken of and plainly promis'd therein, by all possible Means and Diligence labour to perswade himself, that of all *Histories* whatever this is the truest.

The History supports the Doctrine.

Now he who believes the *Historical* Part of the NEW TESTAMENT, consequently receives all other Things compriz'd in that Book; as may be collected from what has been disputed before, and will be made more intelligible

ligible in the two following Chapters.

But, if any one gives full Assent to all Things contain'd in the NEW TESTAMENT: For that reason he is oblig'd to give such Faith as he ought to what is contain'd in the OLD, since we have answer'd already to all that may be objected concerning any Corruption or Depravation, which might perhaps happen to those Books. And so, we presume, we have plainly enough prov'd, whether it be first granted the Religion of *Jesus of Nazareth*, who is call'd Christ, is true, or not granted; or should it be confess'd there may be some true Religion, or deny'd; nothing of Weight sufficient can be urg'd to with-hold any from embracing the Books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT; but on the contrary, there are many proper Arguments, of Efficacy enough, to prevail for their being religiously receiv'd; and to produce a just Acknowledgment of the Truth of all Things comprehended therein.

*He cannot
doubt the
Old Testa-
ment
who re-
ceives the
New.*

*General
Conclusion
of this
Chapter.*



C H A P. IX.

To shew, that much greater Faith is due to those, than is commonly given to any other Books whatever, comprehending Matters either of Doctrine or History.

Where several Objections, especially concerning the Doctrine of the NEW TESTAMENT, are confuted.



Of Faith due to the Books of the Old and New Testament.

HERE some body perhaps will own what we have hitherto said may be of some Force to prove the like Credit to be due to the Scriptures of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, as is generally given to other Books ; but not more than to all others, nor Faith, that will not admit the questioning any Thing

Thing written in them ; and which is ordinarily affirm'd we ought to give, by all Professors of the *Christian Religion*. *Answer first*. Wou'd to God so much Faith were allow'd the Books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, especially the NEW, as is commonly yielded to many other *Histories* or Books. For this might be enough to incline Men at length to become true Christians, and to live according to the Precepts of the NEW TESTAMENT. But what is to be lamented, greater Credit is annex'd to *Thucydides*, for instance, and *Sallust*, than to the Histories of *Matthew* and *John*, altho' these not only liv'd at that time, when the Things they recount were transacted, but were present themselves in almost all, which cannot be affirm'd of the former; who, for the most part, were far from being Eye-witnesses of what they committed to Writing. To say nothing particularly of the Nonage in which *Sallust* must be, or rather of his not being born, when the War of the *Romans* against *Jugurtha* was

Comparison of sacred and profane History.

commenc'd, carried on, and concluded, of which he undertook to give a Narrative ; be that as it will, it cannot (in the Sense we now speak) be positively said he liv'd then : And notwithstanding such Belief is given to his *History*, that none were ever yet heard of, who had the Confidence to oppose or doubt the Truth of any Thing affirmatively there recorded. This is most certain, no Man who had any Reputation for Prudence or Learning, ever did so ; but thoroughly believ'd, and would freely acknowledge, he thought the Sum or Argument of his *History* to be perfectly true ; altho' the Author was so far from being an Eyewitness of what he writ.

*Complaint
of Unbe-
lief that
reigns
every
where.*

But why do I instance *Thucydides*, *Sallust*, or any other Historian, who liv'd in, or near the Time, or was present when the Matters he relates were acted ? May it not be plainly made evident, there is scarce any Compiler of *History*, how remote soever in Time or Place, from Facts and Events he relates, who has not much more Credit

dit in all Things not manifestly romantick and fabulous, than is given to those beforemention'd, or other Writers of the *History* of *Jesus* of *Nazareth* in the NEW TESTAMENT, and of Passages relating to him and his Religion? Which by a Comparison may be easily discover'd.

Shewm by a plain Similitude, that few heartily believe the History of the NEW TESTAMENT.

THERE is no Man that is not an Ideot, who believing but very lightly, that for depositing but one Farthing, he shall gain millions of Pieces of Gold, will not instantly part with that Farthing. So no-body of a sound Mind, who in never so low a Degree, believes, that for depositing (if I may so say) all the Accomodations of this mortal Life, and even Life itself, to obey God, according to the Precepts of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, he shall obtain thereby another, and that

an immortal Life, attended with the most transcendent and endless Felicity (as it must be, if the Writers aforesaid are to be believ'd) who would not immediately resolve to do it. At the same time, we see but a small Number who seriously apply themselves to that good, that most excellent Work. From hence it follows, that very few give the least Faith or Credit to those Writers, tho' so many pretend to it by outward Profession.

*Answer to
an Objec-
tion con-
cerning
Christian
Faith.*

Nor does it avail much to say here, this comes to pass, because the establish'd Opinion is, that we are oblig'd, of necessity, to give full and absolute Faith to those Books, or else we do nothing; which is not the Opinion of all. Moreover, an infinite Number of those who are call'd Christians, especially the Subjects of the Church of *Rome*, will have Faith to be progressive, in its beginning weak and small, and afterwards gradually augmenting and gathering Strength: And that any one with good Works, altho' he has but very little Faith, if he be endu'd
with

but with an infirm Persuasion of the Truth of the *Evangelical History*, may render himself capable of receiving that divine Grace, by the Efficacy whereof, he will afterwards be made thoroughly sensible of the Evidence and Truth of what the above-nam'd Writers report concerning *Jesus* of *Nazareth*. But which Way soever we turn ourselves, we shall scarce meet with one in a hundred, among the Professors of Christianity, really adorn'd with Piety and Holiness of Life, or that studies and endeavours to attain true Sanctity and Probity, for the Reason every one admits *Christ* propos'd it; of which Sanctity and Probity, and no other, we speak here.

*The Similitude more fully explain'd
and enforc'd.*

'TIS now plainly superfluous to prove, that immortal Life, accompanied with the most consummate and perpetual Beatitude, when compar'd

par'd with this Life, altho' abounding with all worldly Goods, which can possibly be possess'd and enjoy'd, is as some millions of Gold, compar'd to one single Farthing; and this any one may easily perceive: Nay, it must be confess'd, that such Beatitude must be beyond all Comparison. Forasmuch, as between one single Farthing, and millions of Pieces of Gold, there is some, tho' small Proportion, since both of them are finite Things; but between this mortal and that immortal Life, between these temporal and those eternal Goods, there is no Measure nor Proportion; this Life, and these Goods being finite, the other immense and infinite.

Add hitherto the different Quality of the one Life, and of the one kind of Goods from the Quality of the other, which in the heavenly, is beyond all Similitude or Comparison more excellent: Forasmuch as some millions of Gold are but of the Value of I know not how many millions of Farthings: Besides, no-body
has,

has, nor can so much as hope for every Accomodation that may be possess'd and enjoy'd in this mortal State ; and of which, all who submit to *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, are not destitute nor depriv'd no more than others : On the contrary, many that seriously obey the Lord *Jesus*, have a greater Share of the Goods of this World, and live longer than an innumerable Multitude who refuse to obey him : Not to say, as perhaps I very well might, there is not one among the Servants of the Lord *Jesus* as wretched as he seems to be to outward Appearance, who is not at the same time, by the intrinsick Goods of his Mind, and Peace of Conscience, to be esteem'd more happy than any that disobey him.

The

The whole Doctrine of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT taken together, more certain than any other Doctrine whatever.

THUS much we have said in this Place touching the *History* of *Jesus of Nazareth*, and Things past relating to him and his Religion, included in the NEW TESTAMENT: The same we desire may be understood of the *Doctrine* likewise deliver'd therein; there being as much Reason for one as the other. The *History* and the *Doctrine* are so interwoven, that treating of one, implies the treating of both: Moreover the *History* cannot be true; but the *Doctrine* must be true no less, as we shall soon demonstrate. Wherefore to proceed, we affirm, that no other Books whatsoever, in which any *Doctrine* or *Doctrines*, together with *History* is deliver'd, are equal in Dignity and Importance to these of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT;

MENT; which is a very good Motive for believing them.

For, almost all *Doctrine* compriz'd in other Books, is chiefly supported by Reasons, which if not approv'd by any one, there remains nothing to engage him to receive that *Doctrine*, and thereby no Injury is done to the Author or Writer; although in the meantime he may firmly believe whatever is annex'd to it in respect to *History*. But the *Doctrine* contain'd in the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT is such, that its principal Foundation is not Reason, but Authority; and Authority grounded on the *History* recorded in those Books. So that whoever assents to the *History*, must in like manner of necessity assent to the *Doctrine*. And what's more, the very *Doctrine* is Part of the *History*, insomuch as one without the other cannot be rejected.

Matthew, for instance, in the 5th, 6th and 7th Chapters of his *History*, recites a certain Sermon of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, which consists only of divine Precepts of holy Living; as a Means

*Built on
the certain
Truth of
the Histo-
ry.*

*Example
out of the
New Testa-
ment.*

Means whereby we may obtain true Beatitude, and an Inheritance of Heaven. This, without doubt, is altogether Matter of Doctrine, and may be said to be the Sum and Substance of all the Doctrine of the NEW TESTAMENT, which no body can find any Reason to oppose, who believes the *History* of *Jesus* to be true, as written by the same *Matthew*; and so will believe no less, that the Lord *Jesus* wrought many Miracles, and after suffering an infamous Death, rose gloriously to Life again; which he himself had foretold would come to pass. For all this the same *Matthew* writes at large, and openly testifies.

*Example
out of the
Old Testament.*

Who likewise can deny that *Doctrine* to be found, which *Moses*, in so many Places, saith, he propos'd concerning Things the *Israelites* were to observe, to enjoy Felicity on Earth, provided he believes all he writes of the great and wonderful Works God wrought by his Ministry among that People, and other very miraculous Signs, visibly exhibited for the Confirmation

mation of his *Doctrine*; or, at least, if he believes that *Doctrine* to be deliver'd to the *Jews*, for the Reasons *Moses* himself assigns.

But possibly some will allow this may indeed be true; but say it follows not from thence all is to be receiv'd, we read in the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT. I affirm, in regard to the latter, of which we chiefly speak, there is the same Reason for believing all the rest, as that small Part now mention'd. As to what those *Evangelists* write, in point of *Doctrine*, which ought to be entirely embrac'd, *that* came from *Jesus* of *Nazareth* himself; and therefore if the History the *Evangelists* writ of *Jesus* is to be believ'd, who report he wrought Miracles exceeding the utmost Bounds of Nature, and return'd to Life after a cruel and bloody Death; of necessary consequence all must be thought to be rightly deliver'd, which the same *Evangelists* declare of the whole *Doctrine* of the Lord *Jesus*.

There are some few Expressions in the *History* of those *Evangelists*, not spoken

The Doctrine of the Old and New Testament equally certain.

Of the Doctrine of others in the New Testament.

spoken by *Jesus* himself, and yet seem to belong to that *Doctrine*, which ought to be approv'd. As when the *Evangelists* explain some Words of *Jesus Christ*; or of themselves quote some Passage of the OLD TESTAMENT, for Confirmation of what they say; or relate Things St. *John Baptist* taught before. But when they explain the Words of *Jesus*, or of their own Authority, cite and apply any Passage of the OLD TESTAMENT, that belongs not really to *Doctrine* (unless in a very small Part, as will be shew'd hereafter) and what they make *John* speak in reference to *Doctrine*, to Things to be done or to be believ'd, is such as ought not altogether to be receiv'd by Christians, because it relates wholly to the Times of the OLD TESTAMENT, or was afterwards openly pronounc'd, and preach'd by *Jesus* himself, and acknowledg'd to be Part of the *Doctrine* of *Jesus*, but not of *John*, altho' he spake the same before, as by Instances appears.

Be that as it will, the *Evangelists* and *John Baptist* were such Men, that, if Namely, of John Baptist. what is *Historically* reported of them in the NEW TESTAMENT be believ'd, it is necessary, or certainly very consonant to Reason, to esteem whatever they taught to be right and true; for in regard to *John Baptist*, the History informs us, *Jesus* testified he was not only endued with a Spirit of Prophecy; but the greatest of all Prophets, that ever went before him. To say nothing of the extraordinary Manner of his Birth, and what we are told came to pass before and after it. All which most plainly proves him to have been a truly divine Person, who could not err in Things relating to *Doctrine*.

In respect to the Four *Evangelists*, Likewise of the Four Evangelists. one of them, *John*, as the History shews, was not only an Apostle of *Jesus*; but likewise singularly belov'd by him, and therefore could no more be mistaken in *Doctrine*, than *Jesus* himself; but *Luke*, as that History makes manifest, was always intimate with *Paul*, another Apostle of *Jesus*; tho'

M the

the same cannot be affirm'd of the other two with so little Danger of Error, because the Name or Sirname of *Matthew* and *Mark* might be common to many, who profess'd the Christian Religion at that Time and in those Places; yet if we add to this, what has been perpetually believ'd from the most remote Antiquity, nay constantly affirm'd, it may be clearly collect-ed out of the same History, that one was an Apostle of the Lord *Jesus*, the other thoroughly acquainted, at least with one of the chief Apostles; and therefore both worthy of Faith in Matters of *Doctrine*; altho' we conjecture also, there is nothing written in *Mark's* History, and personally express'd by him that seems to refer to *Doctrine*, which was not said by one of the *Three* other Evangelists.

*Of other
Writers of
the New
Testament.*

By what we have hitherto discour-sed, it may be plainly enough under-stood, that if Faith be due to the *Hi-story* of the NEW TESTAMENT, it must be due no less to all Things re-lating to *Doctrine*, written by *Peter*,
Paul,

Paul, John, James and Jude, in their Epistles ; forasmuch as all these, as we are told there, were Apostles of Christ. Moreover, all that is found in the *Acts* of the Apostles in regard to *Doctrine* likewise, if the *History* in itself is believ'd, cannot in the least be question'd ; since whoever delivers any thing of *Doctrine*, is there describ'd to be such as could not err therein. Now, if the *History* of the *Apocalypse* or Revelation (let who will be the Writer) shall likewise be thought true, whatever of *Doctrine* is contain'd in that Book, must of necessity be acknowledg'd to be so, because no body speaks of Things of that kind in the Revelation, but *Jesus* himself or his Angel, or some other Celestial Voice sometimes heard there. So that here is no Room for any Error in *Doctrine*, where we have such abundant Assurance of the Truth of the *History*.

Now, concerning the *Doctrine* of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* ; if Faith be allow'd the *History* of the NEW TESTAMENT, that cannot be doubt-

Particularly of the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

ed, especially where *Paul* is taken to be the Author for a Reason already assign'd, *viz.* that he was an Apostle of *Jesus*, and therefore could not err. But whoever writ the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, I affirm nevertheless, if Credit be given to what is either obscurely or openly express'd there in point of History, we are equally obliged to yield Faith to the *Doctrine* comprehended in it. For, from many Passages, and the whole Manner and Way of Stile and Instruction, it may be clearly collected the Author was what he professes himself to be, a divine Person, and peculiarly chosen of God to teach and propagate the Christian Religion, and by consequence must clearly, certainly, and without Suspicion of Error, know the Things he asserts or denies in Matters of *Doctrine*.

Dis-

Distinction of what the Writers of the New Testament deliver in reference to Doctrine.

BUT 'tis to be observ'd, in reference to what that Writer or all the rest in the *New Testament* teach, save *Jesus Christ* only, we must (as has been lately intimated) make some Distinction: For either it relates to certain Things indispensably to be done or to be believ'd; and this certainly is a Part of *Doctrine*; and wherein, if they were such, as they are in the *History* represented, it were impossible they should err in Matters absolutely necessary to be known or practis'd: Or what they teach belongs to the Explanation of some Words of *Jesus*, which have no Regard to Things to be done or believ'd, such are almost all the Expressions there, or belongs to the Interpretation of some Places of the *Old Testament*, the Explanation of Arguments drawn from thence, or for

1st Distinction.

2d Distinction.

some other Reason by them alledg'd ; and this is not so properly a Part, as a Supplement (if I may so say) or Confirmation and Proof of the *Doctrine* ; and, what is to purpose to mention here, all those Things, the *History* affirms, might be most infallibly true, and notwithstanding they might lightly err sometimes in this Part. For all the Strength of their Authority, necessarily to be collected out of the *History*, had respect to that only which was properly *Doctrinal*, the Truth whereof in reality was neither to depend on the Authority of ancient Monuments, nor any Reasoning whatever ; but only on Divine, and that immediate Revelation imparted to them ; so that they might surely know they could not deceive others, nor be deceiv'd themselves ; altho' they had no other Confirmation of what they taught.

See 1 Cor.
chap. vii.

And therefore where divine Revelation was wanting, did not so much as affirm what they said, nor give nor prescribe Rules to any ; but declar'd, they

they only propos'd their private Opinion, as is done by *Paul* the Apostle, in some particulars, respecting Virgins and Widows, whether they might or might not, or ought to marry; and this is a new Kind of Things they taught of themselves, of which, in the Distinction foregoing, we made no separate mention: For besides its comprehending but a very few Matters, it cannot properly be placed to *Doctrine*, seeing herein they speak not positive as in the foresaid Instances.

In short, tho' we doubt not in the least, but all that on any Reason whatever is deliver'd as Part of *Doctrine* is true and rightly laid down, and that no Argument nor Testimony is taken from the OLD TESTAMENT, which may not, in a very great Measure, be defended, and prov'd to be solidly and rightly applied; and moreover, that all the Laws and Precepts therein are excellent, especially for the State of those Times, and Circumstances in which they were given: Nevertheless, 'tis enough to justify the Soundness and

Integrity of the *Christian Faith*, if we take to be undeniable whatever is contain'd in it concerning *Doctrine*, truly and properly so call'd; namely, Things indispensably to be done or believ'd. Now he will esteem that to be infallibly certain, who believes nothing of the *History* comprehended in the NEW TESTAMENT; as may abundantly appear by what has been said.

But in this kind of teaching, we would have *Prophecies* compriz'd, seeing they ought to be believ'd, yet not so properly as other Matters belonging to the Affair of Salvation. Without doubt, whatever Kind we are for referring them to (shewn or not by us) whoever applies Faith to the *History* of the NEW TESTAMENT, must also have the same Regard for the *Prophecies*, and not question their Truth, as proceeding from Men divinely inspir'd, and such who could not consequently deceive nor be deceiv'd.

Now

Now all we have disputed concerning the NEW TESTAMENT, to prove if the *History* be adjudg'd true, we are of necessity oblig'd to believe the *Doctrine* so no less; the same may be argu'd of the OLD TESTAMENT. But to avoid being tedious, what has been offer'd concerning the NEW may suffice; because, as has been said from the Beginning, if Authority be ascrib'd to the NEW TESTAMENT, Faith is not in the least to be with-held from the OLD: Besides which, if the *History* of the OLD TESTAMENT is granted to be true, this is enough for them, who say Faith is due to both those Books; for he who receives the NEW TESTAMENT, has therein all really needful to be known as to *Doctrine*; but if in Things relating to it, there may be somewhat which depends also on the OLD, that Part of *Doctrine* is to be look'd upon as nothing but Matter of *History*: Such for instance are some Rules God gave by the Ministry of *Moses*, belonging to Ceremonies, and the Polity of the People of *Israel*.

Other

The Doctrine of the Old Testament is likewise grounded on the Truth of the History.

*Other Proofs of the Truth of the
NEW and OLD TESTAMENT.*

THERE is another Reason in my Judgment, of no small Import, to demonstrate no other Book nor Books whatever, containing any *Doctrine* or *History*, are comparable to these in respect to Faith. Other Writings, for the most part, have no certain present, nor past Effects attending them, to vouch for the Truth of what they relate like these: For if any one, for example, shall doubt whether there ever was a Civil War between *Caius Marius* and *Lucius Sylla* Citizens of *Rome*, as we are plainly inform'd by History; by what other undeniable present or past Testimonies can he be convinc'd of this, but by those Books? By no other certainly, or such as are very dubious and disputable.

*Evidence
of the Mi-
racles
wrought
by Christ.*

But if any one doubts whether *Jesus* of *Nazareth* wrought Miracles exceeding the establish'd Bounds of Nature,

ture, as is plainly said in the NEW TESTAMENT, he may be easily convinc'd, since all along, from that very Time, an innumerable Multitude have receiv'd his *Doctrine*; which, without those wonderful Credentials (for Reasons before given) would never have been embrac'd, especially from the very Beginning, by so many: Besides this, the present and past Confession of them who are and were particularly the greatest and most avow'd Enemies of *Jesus of Nazareth*, and his *Doctrine*, makes the Truth of this appear worthy of the most consummate and entire Faith; as in all Cases the Concession of an Adversary is wont to go a great Way.

If we are for turning our Thoughts to Facts the most incredible of the NEW TESTAMENT (which if believ'd, we must believe the rest) *viz.* that *Jesus Christ* rose from Death to Life again, after that ascended into Heaven, often appear'd from thence, and did many miraculous Works; we shall see that of all these Things we have Effects sufficiently

*Evidence
of the Re-
surrection
of Jesus.*

ficiently manifest: Neither would there have been so many found, who testified them even by the Loss of their Blood, as seen by themselves: Or if those had not been, would almost infinite Numbers in succeeding Times, for no other human Reason whatever, and against their own Interest and temporal Felicity, have persisted constantly to believe and affirm all this: But waving this, and granting the Faith built thereon dubious, it appears not in the least how it could come to pass, that (whatever Miracles *Jesus* wrought) so many Men, of all Conditions of Life, should not only receive him as the greatest Master of holy Living (and that with firm Hope, if they follow'd his Precepts, they should, after his Death, inherit an eternal Life) but also believe him to be the true God, and as such religiously worship and adore him, and implore his Grace and Assistance; especially considering, that after all those Miracles, he was by the Sentence of the Magistrate, judiciously condemn'd, nail'd to the Cross, and
cut

cut off, as an obstinate and wicked Man, a contemner of God, and Things sacred, nay, as a Blasphemer, by his own Nation, and those very Men who had seen the Miracles he wrought, and by them receiv'd Benefits. Now these Events, with their Circumstances, are most certainly known ; neither is there any one, tho' never so great an Enemy to *Jesus of Nazareth*, who has the Forehead to deny them, when at this very Day they are partly seen ; their Effects are in some measure visible in Signs, as cannot by any probable Reason be confuted.

Now what shall we say of the History of the *New Testament* ? Are not the *Jews*, who continue to this Time a standing Testimony of the Truth of its principal Parts ? For if that People of old receiv'd not the Law of *Moses*, which they still retain as a most sacred Trust, and for the Reason too which that *History* gives, *viz.* because it was deriv'd from God, as appear'd : It could be hardly possible they should subject themselves to the Yoke of so

Evidence of the Truth of the Jewish History.

The Nature of the Mosaic Law.

burden-

burdensome ceremonial Precepts, as they are call'd, of abstaining from so many Meats, commonly us'd by all other Nations, and of which, not a few are very delicious and grateful; but above all, their submitting to *Circumcision*, is of itself alone sufficient to make it highly credible, the Law of *Moses* was not of human Invention, if it be well consider'd.

Antiquity and Duration of the Jewish Religion.

We see all other ancient Religions, altho' of Worship much less difficult have by degrees vanish'd and disappear'd, insomuch, there is scarce any Memory of them now remaining. Yet this of the Jews, the most ancient of all, is still preserv'd; for which no other apparent Cause can be suggested, but that it had very solid Beginnings and Foundations, afterwards openly and manifestly strengthen'd and confirm'd, as we read throughout that History: And whereas other Religions of Antiquity were wholly destitute of such Supports, of necessity, they must sink, as it happens to other human Things,

Things, when the Foundation fails,
the Superstructure tumbles down.

To this may be added, that other Religions declin'd when the Profession and Practice of them was undisturb'd : *This compared to the Pagan Religion.*

Nay, one of those Religions, the City of *Rome* adher'd to, and which, as to its Substance, a great, I may say, the greatest part of the known World embraced, began then to be reduced to nothing, when *Rome*, together with the Universal Empire, acknowledg'd but one Lord and Master, who profess'd the same as did succeeding Emperors for some long time after. And what can contribute more not only to preserve ancient Rites, which, without any other Assistance, may be able to support themselves, especially those that have Respect to Religion (for they seem to be consecrated to Eternity) but also to introduce new Rites and Customs among any People? Nothing, I say, can conduce more to this than his Pleasure and Example, who, having the Sovereign Power in his Hands, extends his Dominion far and near. From
whence

whence this Religion appears to have had a very infirm Beginning, and feeble Foundation.

*Fate of
the Jews.*

But on the contrary, the Religion of the *Jews* was and is preserv'd; and in all Places (unless in Countries where they are not permitted to reside) there are, who constantly adhere to it; altho' those, who now do and heretofore profess'd the same, have been, for that reason only, every where almost expos'd to Derision, and frequently treated most injuriously, us'd and oppress'd tyrannically, and not only exercis'd with bodily Tortures a hundred Ways, but miserably put to Death. Truly, if there be any one, who from these and other Reasons easily to be produced, perceives not how necessary it is the Religion of the *Jews*, should have had the Rise they ascribe to it; and consequently that the *History* and *Doctrine* likewise, of the *Old Testament* is in this, and therefore in other Parts, true, he is to be number'd among those who cannot, or else maliciously shut their Eyes that they may not see.

The

*The Christian Religion prov'd by the
Jewish, and the Jewish by the
Christian.*

NOW, from the Truth of the *Jews* Religion, from its being given of old to the *Israelites* by God, and from the Certainty of the *History*, and *Doctrine* of the OLD TESTAMENT, every judicious Person cannot but see the Christian Religion, and therein the *History* and *Doctrine* of the NEW TESTAMENT to be true; and that they mutually, as has been alledg'd, support and confirm each other. If any shall reply, the *Jews* will by no means agree to this, I answer, it must be imputed to their peculiar, real, or affected Ignorance, or rather strange and inveterate Obstinacy; and principally to their being form'd, from their Infancy, capital Enemies of the Christian Religion; as Experience testifies.

By what therefore has been hitherto disputed, we hope it is effectually

N. shewn

shewn, greater Credit is to be given to the Books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, whether in regard to *History* or *Doctrine*, than is usually given to most other Writings containing either ; and he, who believes them not, is with-held by no probable Reason, but rather must be strangely weak, or wholly bias'd by evident Improbability ; if he seriously considers the whole Matter, as it has been explain'd.





C H A P. X.

*The Error of those detected, who,
for yielding Faith to the Books of
the OLD and NEW TESTA-
MENT, require such Arguments,
as none can with the least Sha-
dow of Reason oppose.*

*Ignorance of the Nature of Religion,
the Cause of this Error.*



ALTHO' perhaps we have
said enough to effect that
which from the Beginning
we propos'd; yet it may not
be impertinent, before we conclude, to
admonish the Reader, that they, who,
to believe what is written in the OLD
and NEW TESTAMENT, require such
Arguments and Reasons, as no body

can any way object against, and so invincible, as to create certain and undoubted Faith in all, not excepting the most perverse and obstinate, discover they have consider'd the Nature of *True Religion* with very little Attention; which is such, that as many, tho' not very rightly, say, requires the Merit of *Faith*, and is as it were a Test or Touchstone of the Probity of Men, especially the *Religion* deliver'd by the Son of God himself, comprehended in the *New Testament*, of which only it is sufficient for us to speak here.

*Serious
Belief of
the History
of the
Gospel of
itself
makes
Men pi-
ous.*

I say therefore, if the Truth of the Scriptures of the *New Testament* were self-evident, or of such nature, that no body could deny them on any account whatever; every one would not only profess the Religion therein propos'd, and pretend to be a *Christian*, but be so in reality, that is, sincerely obey *Jesus Christ* the Son of God. For the Reward to be conferr'd on them who shall obey *Jesus Christ*, is so great and desirable, that no Man, to obtain it,
would

would not do greater Things (if greater can be) than *Jesus Christ*, the only begotten Son of God, hath prescrib'd ; when fully satisfied he shall thereby obtain that Reward ; as he will certainly be, who believes all Things comprehended in the *New Testament* to be infallibly true, because they most clearly shew the right Way of acquiring it.

Then there would be no Distinction nor Difference between the good and the bad ; no Motive left of acting well or ill ; none for the Encouragement of Virtue, none for the Punishment of Vice as it deserves. Whereas the Reward, as it was first propos'd, being of some Uncertainty, perfectly discriminates the one from the other. For he who is good, ingenuous, and tractable in his Mind and Will, inclin'd at least to adhere to that which is just and honest, namely, what the only begotten Son of God, *Jesus Christ* himself enjoin'd ; or is not in his Heart and Disposition, at least, averse thereto, will easily believe what he hears of

the immense Reward promis'd to them, who shall practise those Things ; provided some probable Hope appears of obtaining it, altho' he sees it not openly as yet ; and so believing, will use his utmost Endeavours to obey and fulfill the Precepts of *Christ* ; but he, who is vicious and ill-dispos'd, and delights not in Things just, and honest, and of good Report, such as are recommended by *Jesus Christ*, the only begotten Son of God, or certainly gives very little or no Heed to them, the greater the Reward, the less he believes it ; if at the same time, for the strong Reasons, and Conjectures which present themselves of the Certainty of this Reward, he conceives some Opinion of it, it is so infirm, that it cannot prevail with him to forsake his ill Habits, and the Pleasures, Honours or Profits he hopes to receive from, or finds in them ; as the truly pious are obliged to do.

The

The Wisdom of God in not proposing the Reward of eternal Life too evidently.

MOST wisely therefore, Almighty God thought not fit that the Reward of Immortality, a Thing most desirable, and by him propos'd to all Men who obey his only begotten Son JESUS CHRIST, should appear self-evident and unquestionable to Mankind (but to some few only at first, who might testify to others what they had seen themselves) and therefore did not ordain the Writing, of the NEW TESTAMENT, wherein there is the most open mention made of that Reward, and which in every Page almost affirm its Certainty to be of such glaring Evidence, as none should be any way able to oppose; but was pleas'd to think it enough that these Writings, and other Arguments of this Reward, where-ever to be collected, should be such, as justly and reasonably ought

N 4 to

to be believ'd : Such, in a word, as to any one who is of honest Principles, or so well disposed as easily to become so, are sufficient ; but to him who is dishonest, and from bad Inclinations not to be reclaim'd, insufficient ; that hereby the Probity of the one, and the Improbability of the other, being openly discover'd ; he might have the most just Cause of inflicting Punishments, and conferring his Favours (which seems agreeable to divine Justice) and by this means exercise his Sovereign Mercy on the one, his righteous Severity on the other, hereby making his wonderful Power, universal Dominion, and Empire, to his infinite and immortal Glory known to all ; which is indeed the chief Aim of God in proposing the *Doctrine* of the Gospel to the World, by his only begotten Son, as in the NEW TESTAMENT is frequently declared.



C H A P. XI.

*What has been above said, partly
confirm'd by the Authority of the
ITALIAN POET DANTE,
For a Conclusion.*



ASTLY, for some Confirmation of what has been said of the Authority of *Holy Scripture*, we take the Liberty to annex the following Verses of *Dante*; not only a celebrated *Poet*, but distinguish'd likewise in his Time, by the Excellence of his Wit, singular Parts, and extensive Learning, in a *Poem* he calls a *Comedy*, where, in the twenty-fourth *Canto* of his *Paradise*, he introduces *Peter* the Apostle, asking him, that is, the *Poet*, whence he had that *Faith* with which he said he was endued, namely, that certain Persuasion

suasion of Religion concerning Things:
The Poet makes Answer to this Query
in the following manner.

*Appresso uscì de la Luce profonda,
Che li splendeva, questa cara Gioia,
Soura la quale le ogni Virtù si fonda.
Onde ti venne? E' jo, la larga Ploia
Dello Spirito santo, ch'è diffusa
In su le vecchie, e'n su le nuove Cuoia,
E'l Sillogismo, che la m'a conchiusa
Acutamente, sì, che'nverso d'ella
Ogni demonstration mi pare obtusa.
L'udi poi, l'antica, E' la novella
Propositione, che sì ti conchiude.
Per che l'hai tu per divina Favella?
Et io, la prouva, ch'èl ver mi dischiude,
Son lopere Seguite, a cui Natura
Non scaldo Ferro mai, ne battè Ancude.
Risposto fummi: Di, chi i'assicura
Che quelle Opere fosser quel Medesimo,
Che vuol provar sì? Non altri il ti giura.*

Se

Se il Mondo si riuolse al Chistianesimo

Diss' Io senza Miracoli, questo uno

Etal, che gli altri non sono il centesimo.

Che tu entraſti povero & diguino

In Campo, a seminar la buona Pianta,

Che fugia vite, & hora e fatto Pruno, &c.

The Meaning of the POET.

FOR the better Explanation of these Verses, they are to be divided into three Parts, and the distinction of those Parts to be observ'd. In ^{1st Part.} the *first*, the certain Truth of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, is declared to be the Ground of Faith. For when the *Poet* had said that the precious *Jewel*, viz. Saving Faith, the Foundation of all Virtues, sprang out of the celestial Illumination: And the *Apostle* had required him to give some Account of the Way and Means whereby this was done, he readily answers, the infallible Truth of God, which he calls the heavenly Shower of the Holy Spirit,

2d Part.

rit, most liberally diffus'd throughout the *Holy Scripture*, was the Demonstrative Syllogism, which produced in him firm and stable Faith, and convinc'd him of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and so perfectly and powerfully, that compared to it, all other Demonstration seem'd lifeless and ineffectual. But since Faith cannot be founded on the Authority of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, till we are thoroughly perswaded, and convinc'd of that Authority. In the *Second Part*, the *Apostle* asking him how he came to know that those Books were certainly deriv'd from the Spirit of God, that is, were of divine Inspiration: The *Poet* answers, the Proof of that depends on those wonderful Works, exceeding the utmost Bounds of Nature, which God, for the Confirmation of his Word, exerted by *Prophets*, *Apostles*, and especially by his only begotten Son JESUS CHRIST. The Effects and plain Tokens of which, he says, are now visible throughout the World: As in the *third* and *last Part* of

of his *Poem*, he very ingeniously, and no less elegantly demonstrates. For ^{3d Part.} on the Apostle's persisting to enquire how he certainly knew that those Miracles, which in several Books of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT are said to be wrought by *Christ*, by *Prophets*, and *Apostles*, were really so wrought, since the *History* of them is contain'd in those Books, of whose Authority some may doubt; and likewise, since no body, by his own Testimony, nor Deposition upon Oath, can evince the Truth of them to us: To this the *Poet* thus replies, to prove by Events we daily behold, that those *Miracles* were truly and actually so wrought, *viz.* If the World was induced to receive the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, without *Miracles*, that must be a Miracle indeed! The greatest of all *Miracles* that ever the Sun beheld!

If so, says he, it was utterly impossible, that you *Apostles* (in Number few, obscure, contemptible, poor, mean Men in the Eyes of the World) should plant and propagate throughout the whole

whole Earth, the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, altogether ungrateful to Flesh and Blood, opposite to the Prepossessions, Projects, and Interests of worldly Men, and hateful to the World it self; it was impossible, says he, that you *Apostles* should plant this Religion every where, in all Regions, as a precious Vine, spreading her Branches and Fruit far and near, tho alas! now become a thorny Bramble, that is to say, adulterated and corrupted by carnal Men. Such is the Sense of the *Poet*.

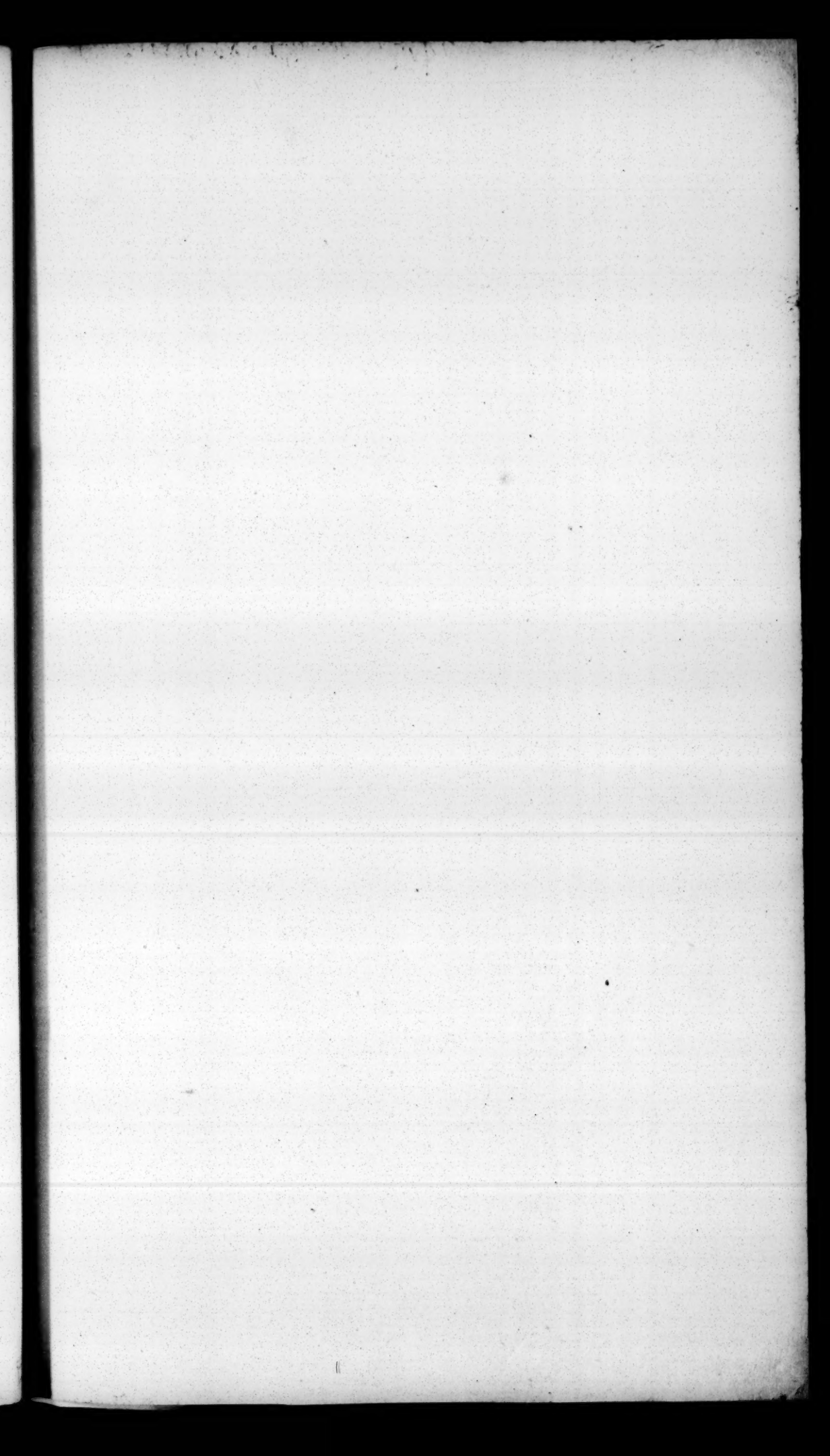
Of which this is the Sum: He affirms our Faith is grounded on the Truth and Authority of the Word of God, as its only Foundation, or what's the same, on the Holy Scriptures of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT: Then this Authority of the divine Word, he as truly, as solidly demonstrates, from those many and most certain *Miracles* wrought to confirm it, to be ascrib'd to nothing but the Operation of the only true God, Evidences of which, are at this very Time
obvious

obvious and visible throughout the World, to any one who seriously and without Prejudice will apply his Mind to view and consider them: And this, in some measure, may serve to illustrate our Argument: To which at present we shall add no more.

Almighty God, and our Lord JESUS CHRIST, grant that this Work, though imperfect and small, may not be altogether fruitless in this Age of the World, which more than all that ever went before it, seems to need these Things. Amen.

F I N I S.





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